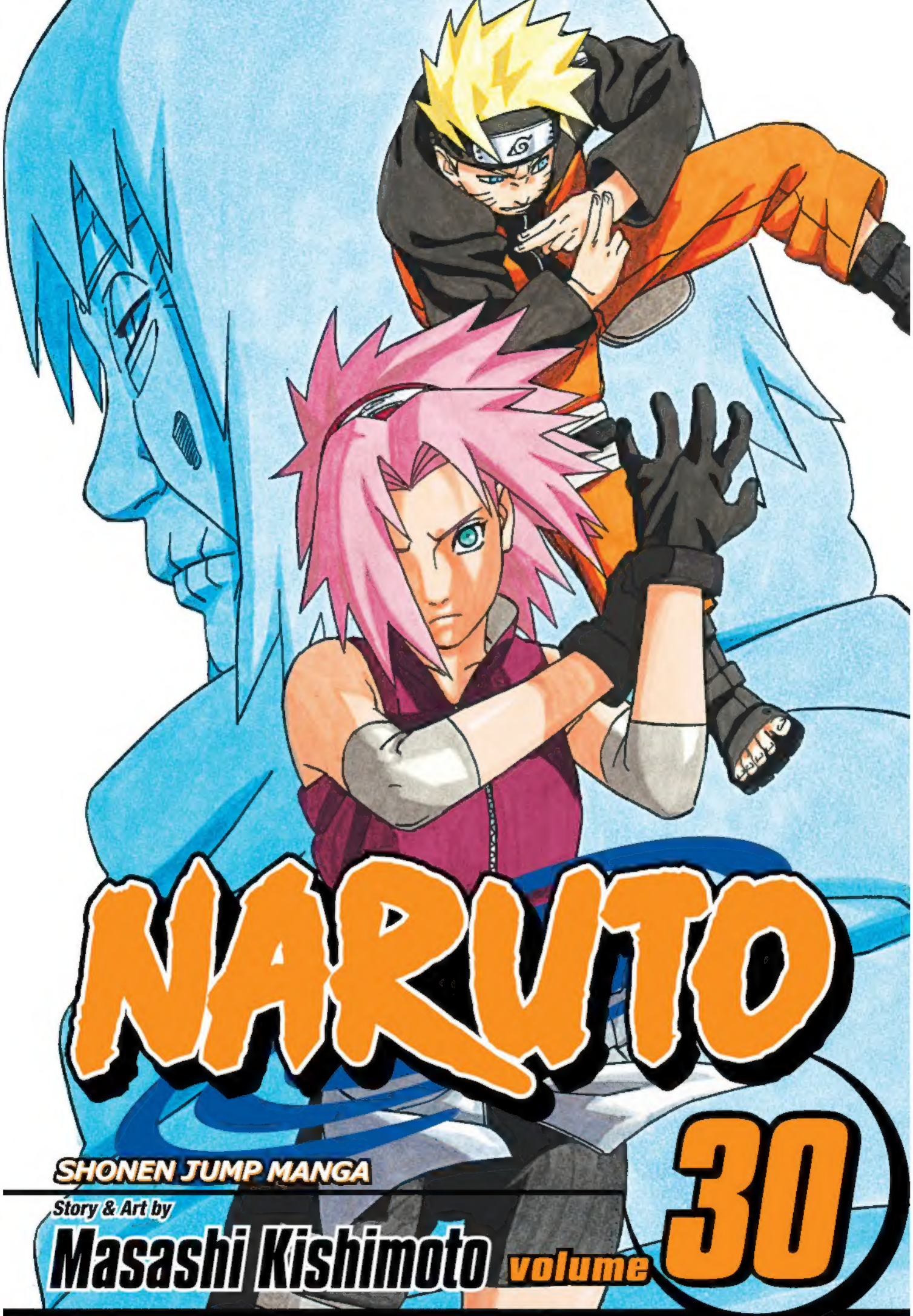


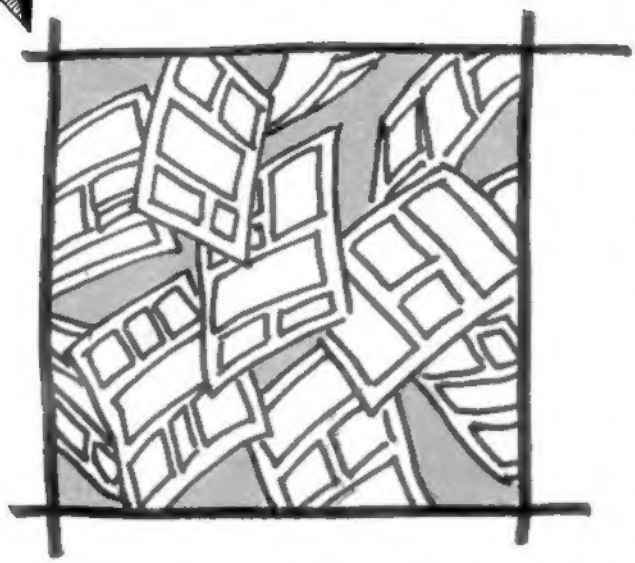
NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

volume 30



岸本斉史

The movies and games coming out these days look so incredible it stuns me. I'm starting to suspect my readers are so used to rich imagery that manga must feel rather underwhelming by comparison. After all, it's still published in black and white... Remember, though, that manga's strength is in its rapid production. So please overlook its weaknesses.

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2005

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.

NARUTO VOL. 30
The SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

This graphic novel contains material that was originally published in English in **SHONEN JUMP** #65-66. Artwork in the magazine may have been slightly altered from that presented here.

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

Translation & English Adaptation/Naomi Kokubo & Eric-Jon Rössel Waugh
Touch-up Art & Lettering/Gia Cam Luc
Design/Sean Lee
Editor/Joel Enos

Editor in Chief, Books/Alvin Lu
Editor in Chief, Magazines/Marc Weidenbaum
VP of Publishing Licensing/Rika Inouye
VP of Sales/Gonzalo Ferreyra
Sr. VP of Marketing/Liza Coppola
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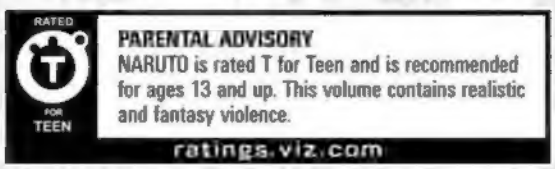

SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

NARUTO

VOL. 30

PUPPET MASTERS

STORY AND ART BY

MASASHI KISHIMOTO

The Story So Far...

Naruto was once the bane of the Konohagakure Ninja Academy. Despite the rough start, he successfully joins the ranks of ninja along with Sasuke and Sakura. During the Chûnin Exam, Orochimaru launches *Operation Destroy Konoha*, an attack thwarted by the Third Hokage's sacrifice of his own life. After the battle, Tsunade steps up to become the Fifth Hokage. Lured by Orochimaru's power, Sasuke leaves Konoha in the company of the Sound Ninja Four. Naruto confronts Sasuke, but no matter how hard he fights, he can't stop his friend.

More than two years pass. Naruto and his friends mature, each undergoing rigorous training. Gaara, who has become Kazekage, is suddenly kidnapped by the dark Akatsuki organization. Naruto and the gang set out for the Akatsuki hideaway on their way to rescue Gaara.

NARUTO

VOL. 30
PUPPET MASTERS

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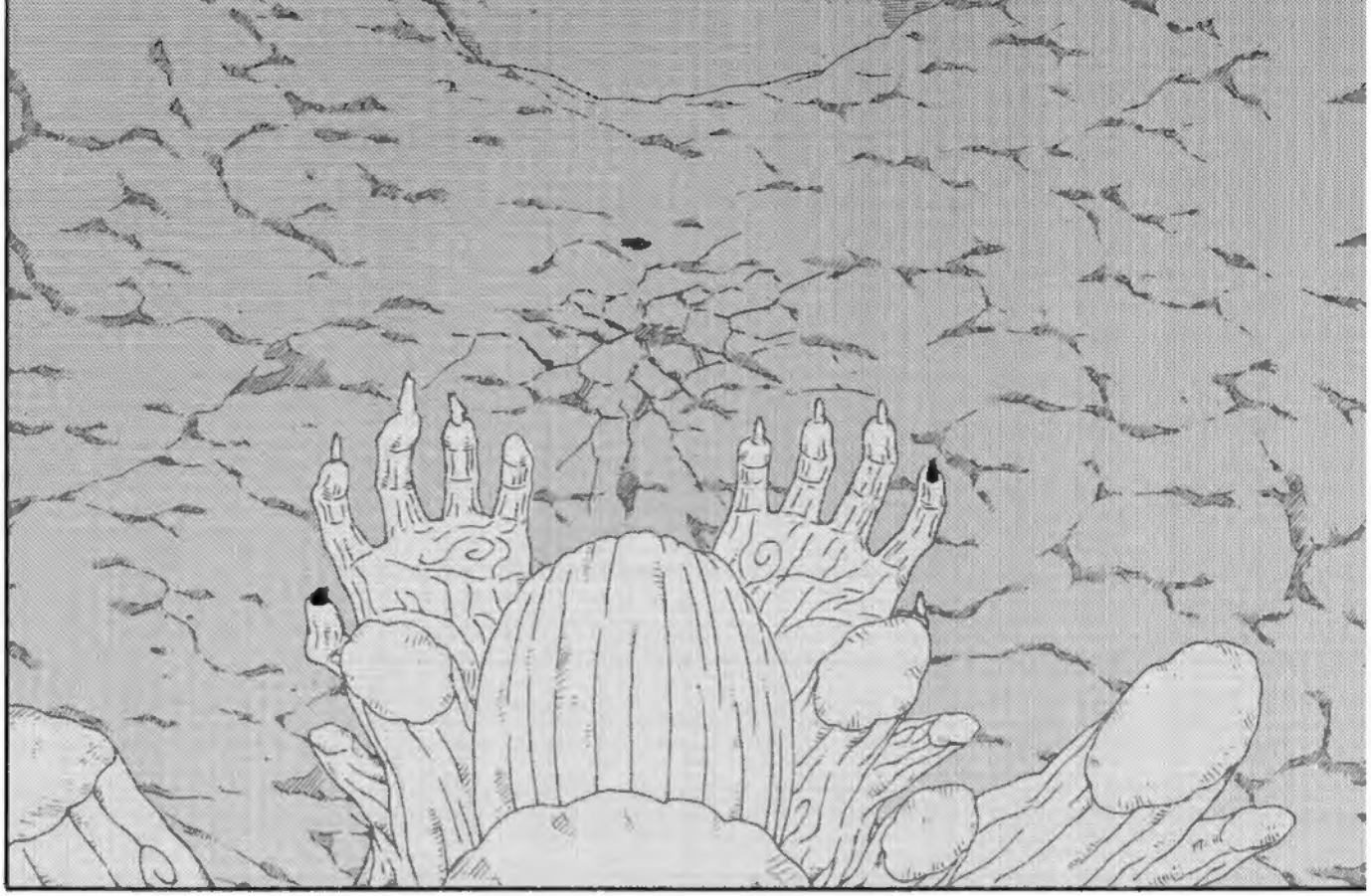
Number 263:
Rage...!!



SASORI, DEIDARA... SEE TO OUR GUESTS. THEY'RE YOURS...
...EXCEPT FOR THE JINCHÛRIKI HOST. BRING HIM TO ME ALIVE.
THE REST OF YOU ARE DONE HERE.

ITACHI.
ABOUT THE JINCHÛ-RIKI...
WHAT KIND OF HOST IS THIS NARUTO?
...
TELL THEM.

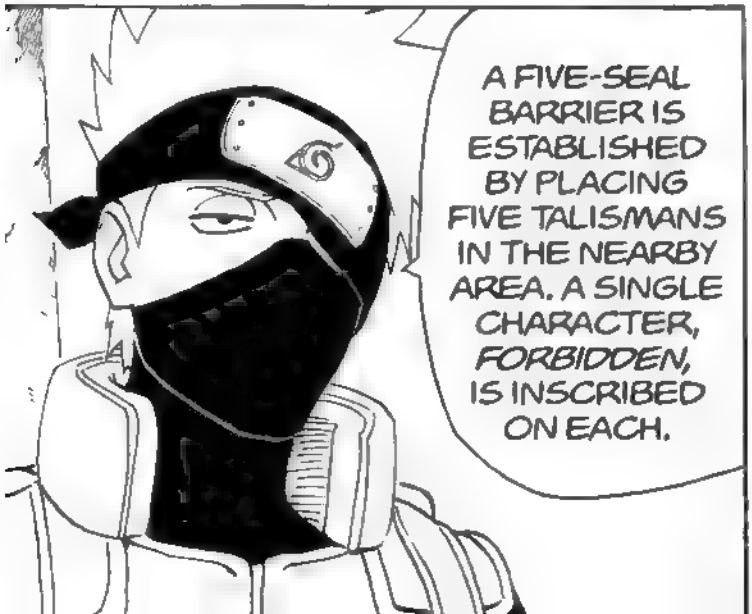
HE IS...
...THE ONE WHO BURSTS IN AND BARKS FIRST.
...
BWOOON
HMM?
CAN'T YOU GIVE US MORE TO WORK WITH?
HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HMPH.
OOON

BWOOM
PHOOF
I'LL BE WAITING TO HEAR FROM YOU.
THUK
THUK

禁

BO
OF

THANKS, PAKKUN.
I GUESS IT'S TIME I GO. I'LL BE NO MORE USE HERE.
NO SENSE GETTING IN THE WAY.


A FIVE-SEAL BARRIER IS ESTABLISHED BY PLACING FIVE TALISMANS IN THE NEARBY AREA. A SINGLE CHARACTER, *FORBIDDEN*, IS INSCRIBED ON EACH.

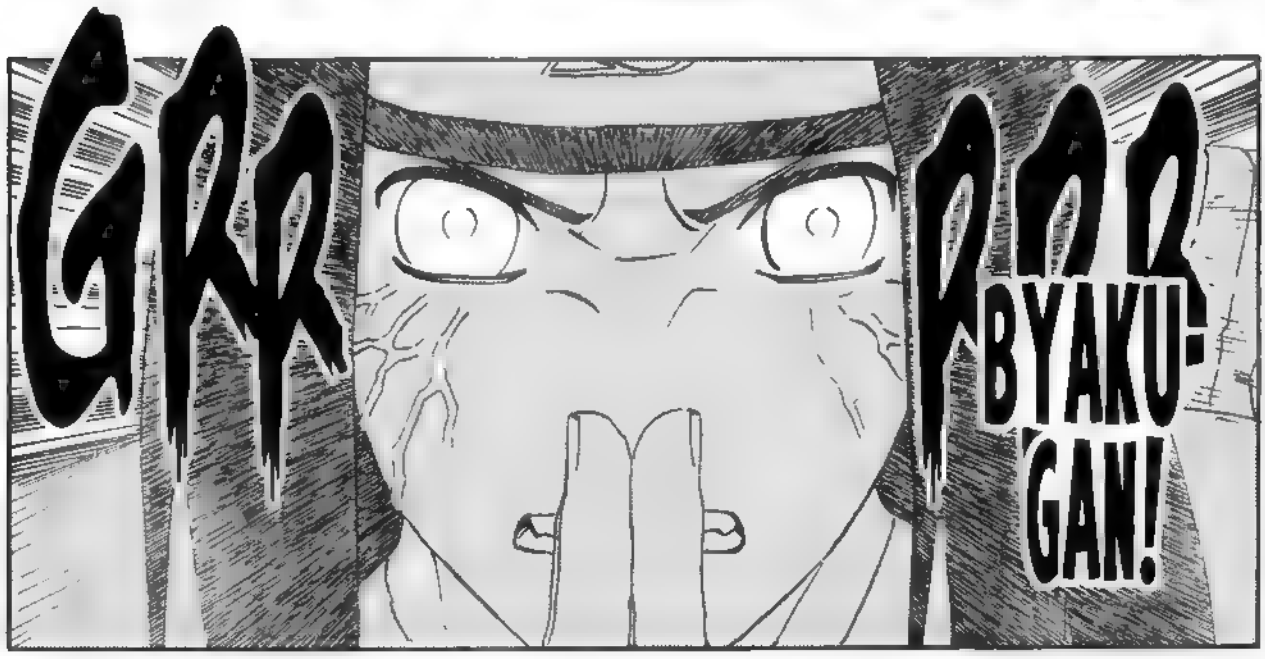
HOW DO WE GET PAST IT?
ALL RIGHT!
KAKASHI, OUR FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS IS THIS BARRIER.

WELL, WHERE ARE THEY?
I MEAN, THE OTHER FOUR.
FWIP

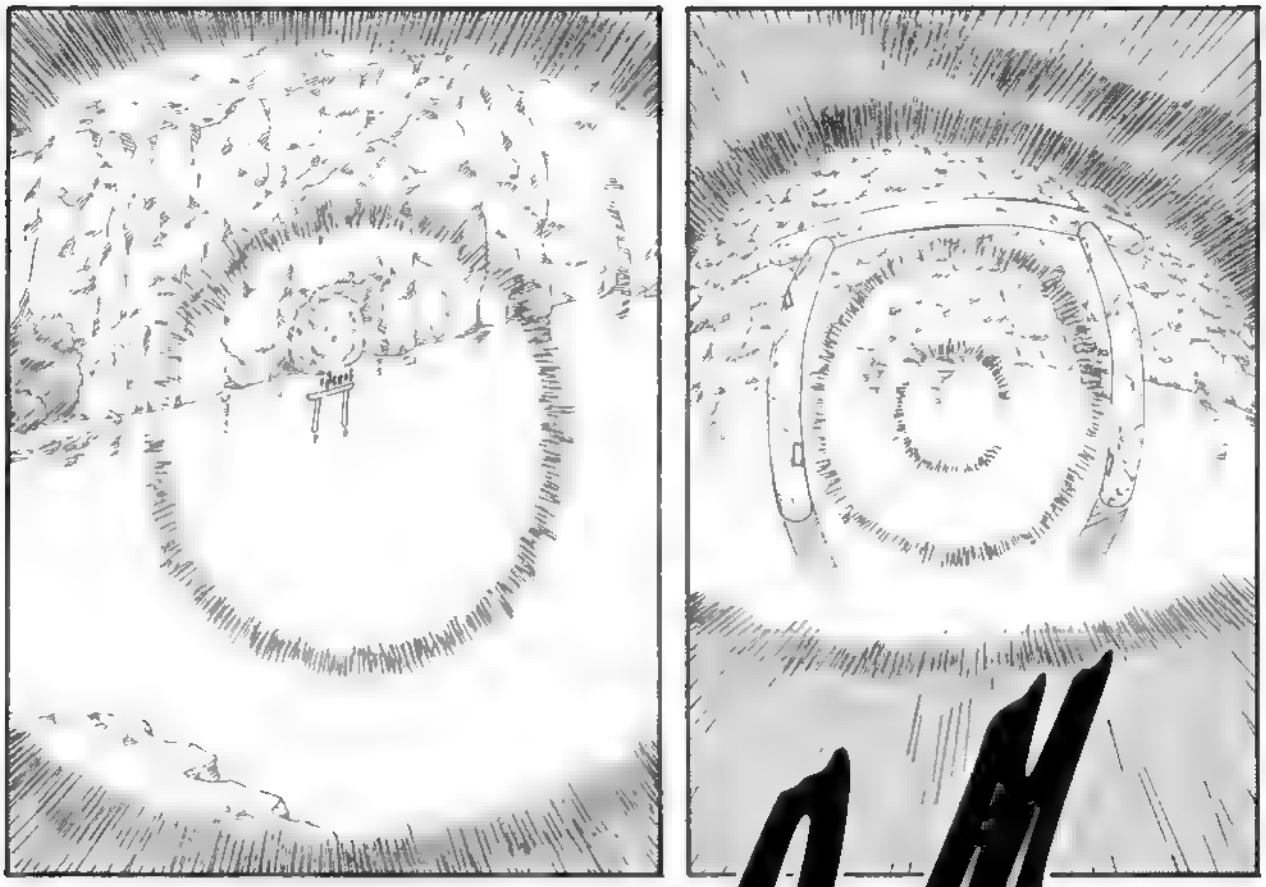
禁
ONE OF THESE IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF US. THERE ARE FOUR OTHERS.
UNTIL WE PEEL THEM ALL OFF, WE CAN'T DO A THING ABOUT THE BARRIER.

GOT IT.

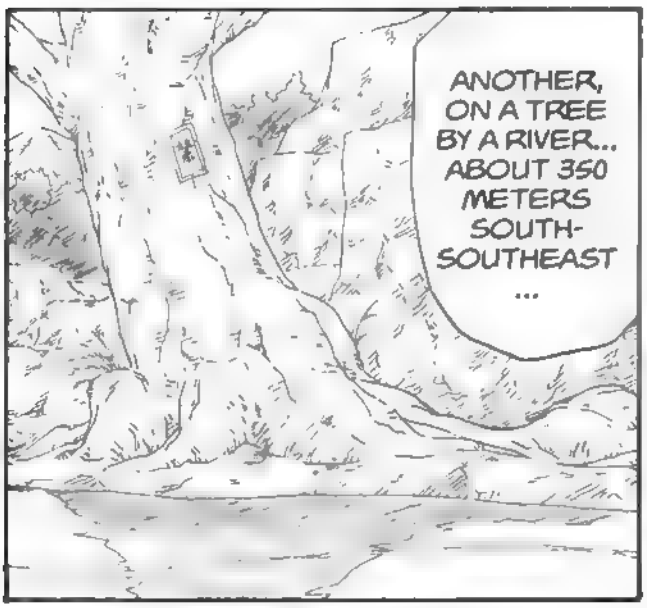
NEJI.

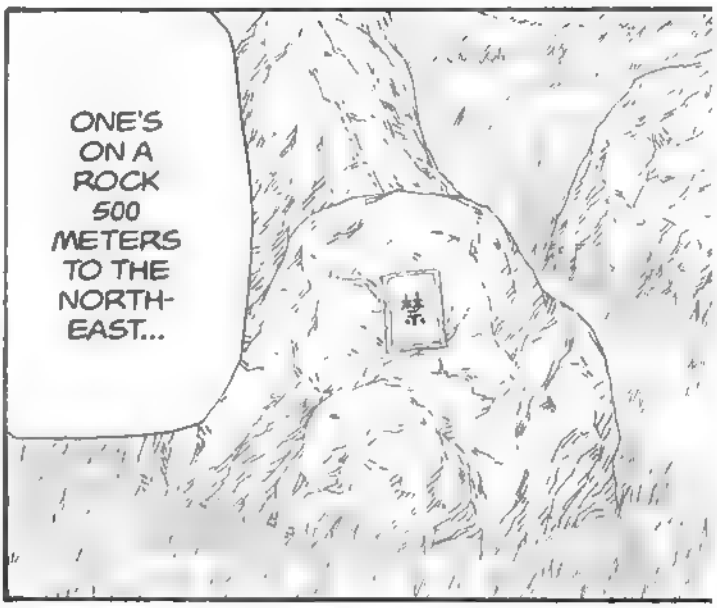

GRR
BYAKU-
GAN!

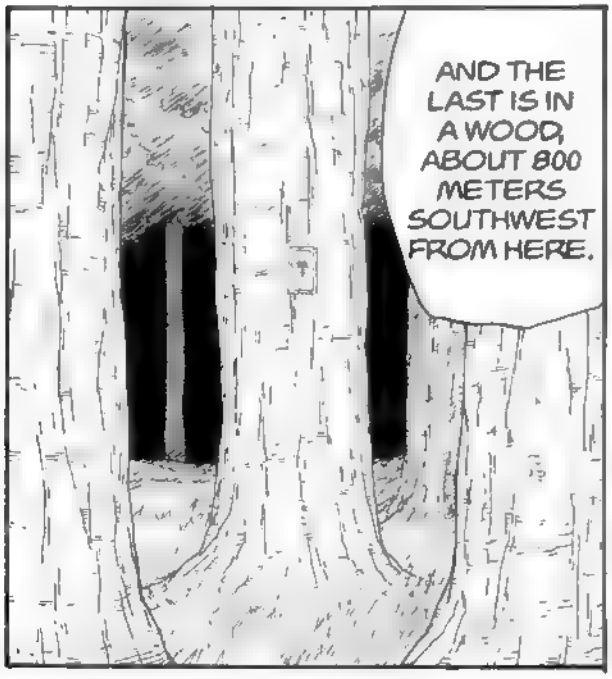
READ THIS WAY

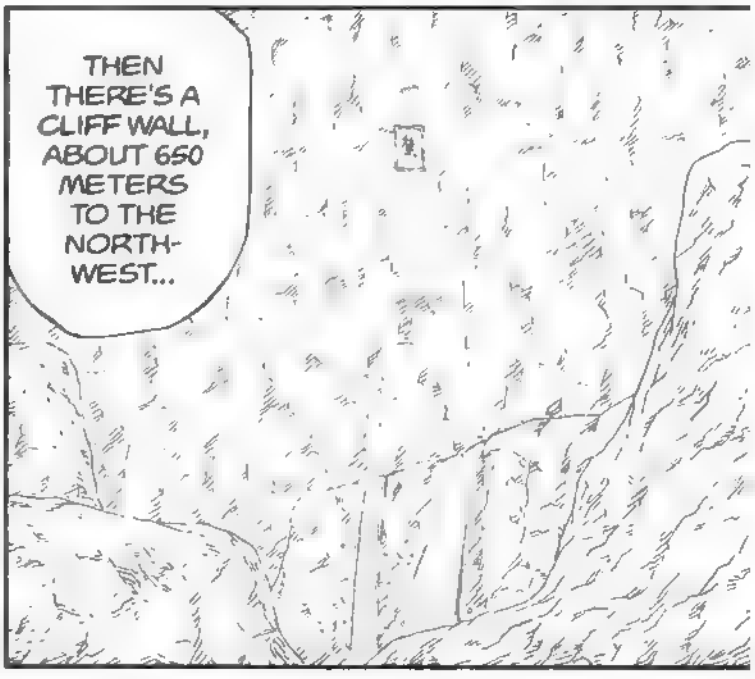


I SEE THEM.


ANOTHER, ON A TREE BY A RIVER... ABOUT 350 METERS SOUTH-SOUTHEAST ...


ONE'S ON A ROCK 500 METERS TO THE NORTH-EAST...
禁


AND THE LAST IS IN A WOOD, ABOUT 800 METERS SOUTHWEST FROM HERE.


THEN THERE'S A CLIFF WALL, ABOUT 650 METERS TO THE NORTH-WEST...

TAKE THESE. NEJI WILL GUIDE US...
...STRAIGHT TO THE TALISMANS.
SHF
ALL RIGHT! THEY'RE ALL WITHIN WIRELESS RANGE.

SNAP
SHRIK
CHUP

THE FREQUENCY'S AT 174.
HANG TIGHT UNTIL I TOUCH BASE.
MY TEAM IS FASTER. WE'LL HANDLE IT.
DING
ALL SET TO GO.
KLIK

FSSH
SCATTER!!
TEAM GUY! LET'S GO FORTH WITH THE POWER OF YOUTH!
WE'RE COUNT-ING ON YOU...
SPASH
SPASH SPASH
GAARA...

READ THIS WAY
OKAY, I FOUND IT!
TUMP
LEE, HEAD A LITTLE MORE SOUTH.
SKEE
GOOD! NOW...
...PEEL AWAY!
I GOT ONE TOO!
SHRIP
RIP
RIP
RIP RIP

SO TO BREAK IN, I'M THINKING WE'LL NEED A SWITCH HOOK ENTRY.

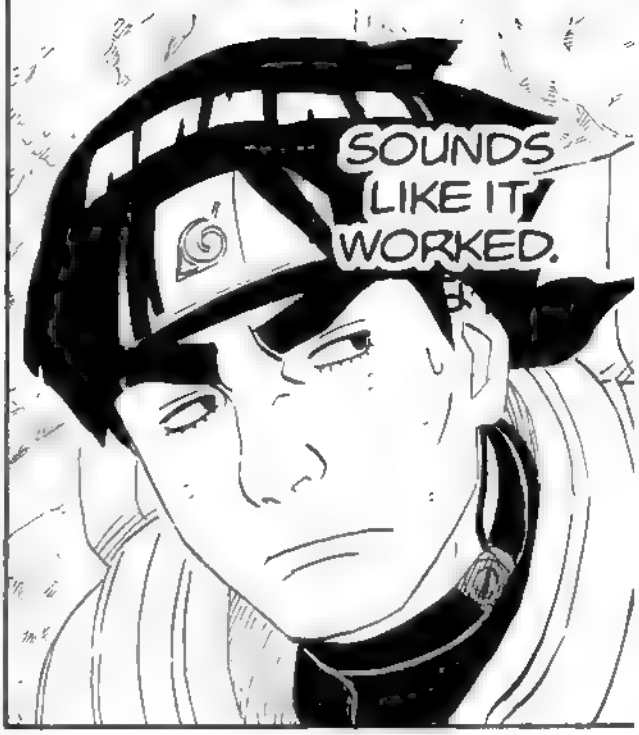
SAKURA!
SHRIP

KRIK

HERE I COME!

SIRA

SKRKAK
!

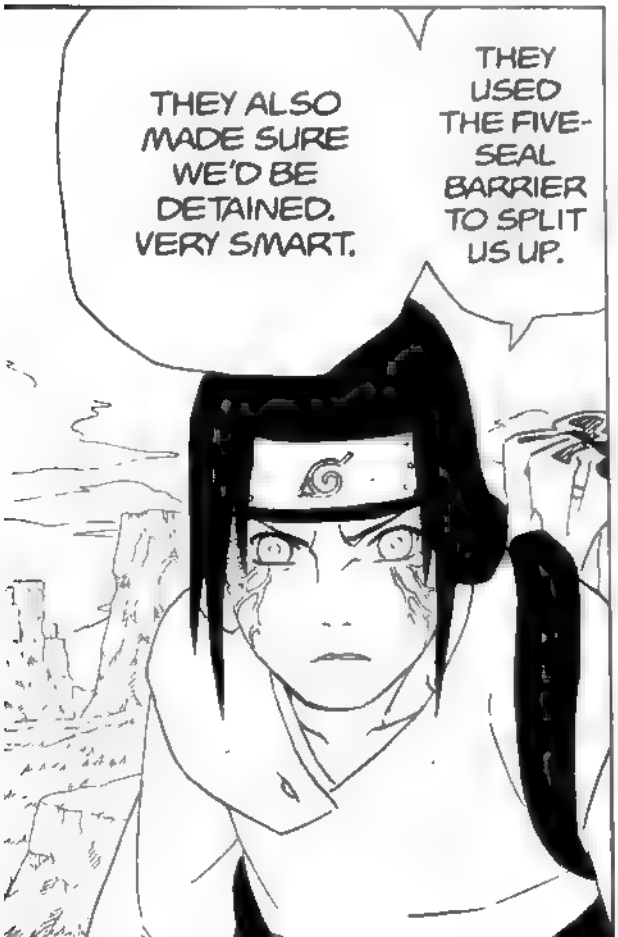

SOUNDS LIKE IT WORKED.

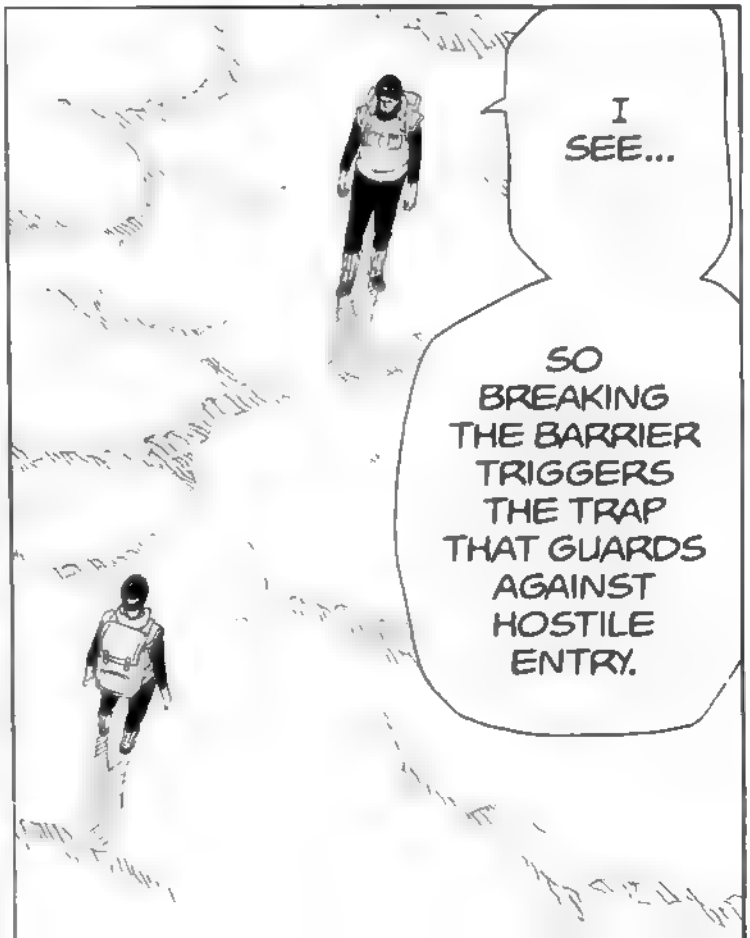
NEJI...

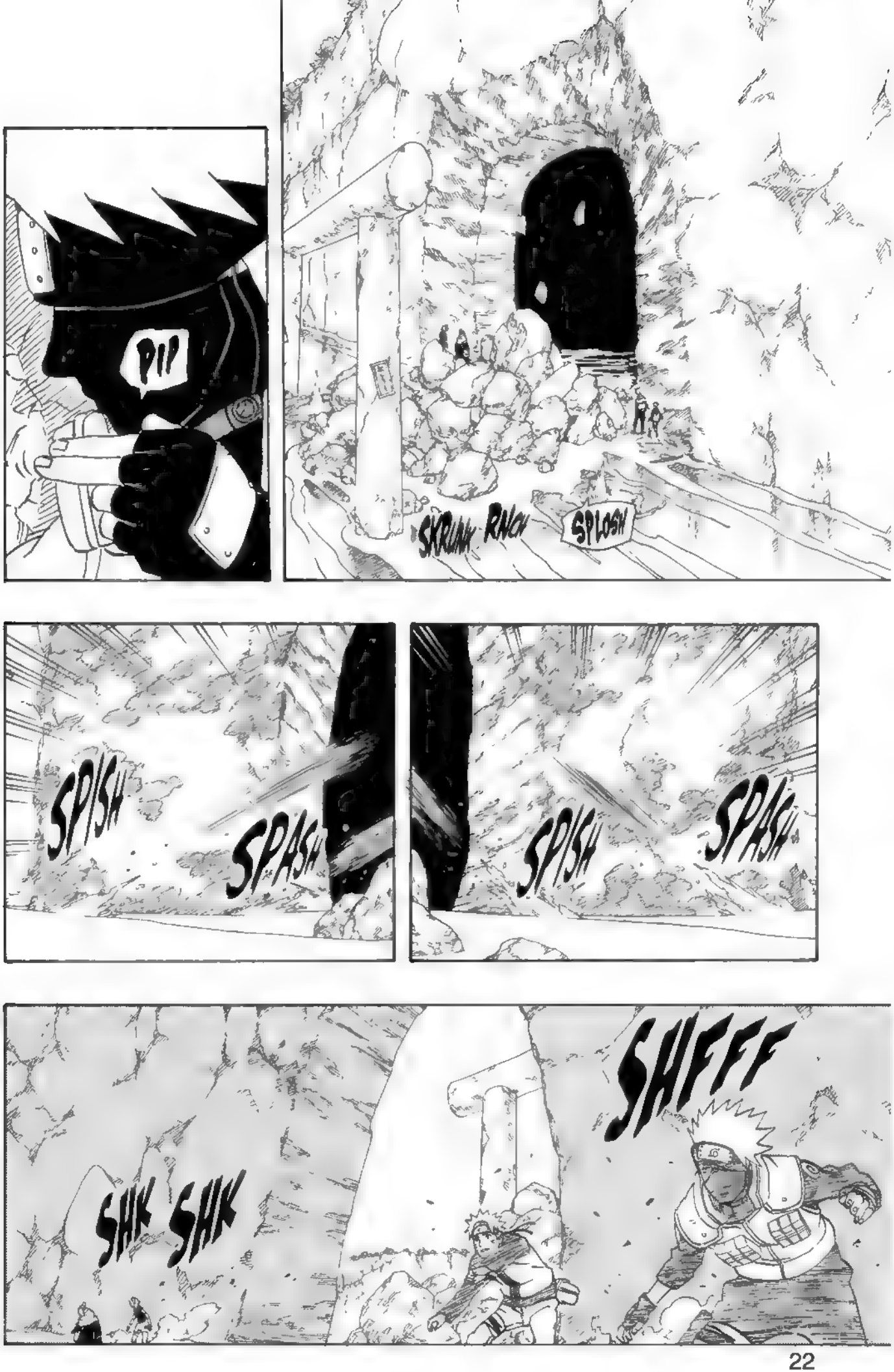
YEAH... SAME OVER HERE.

SKRKAK

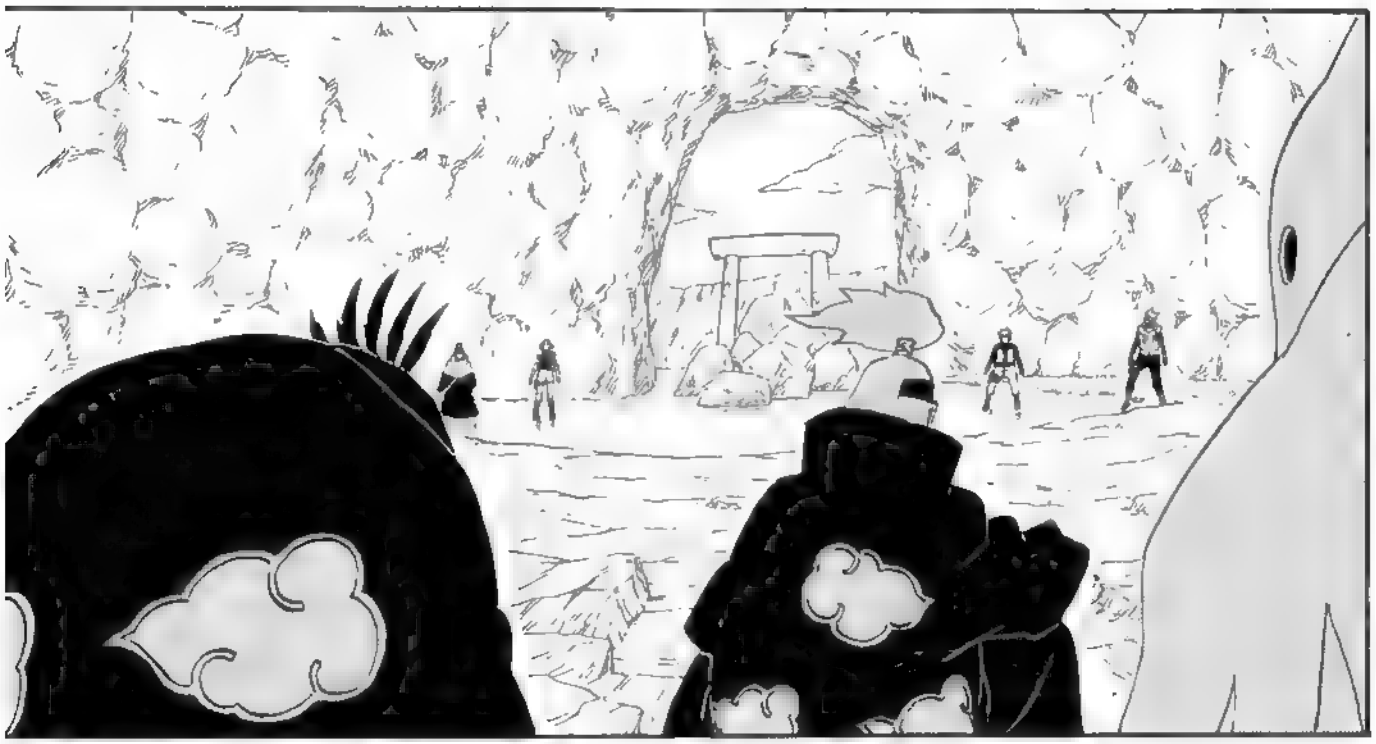
READ THIS WAY





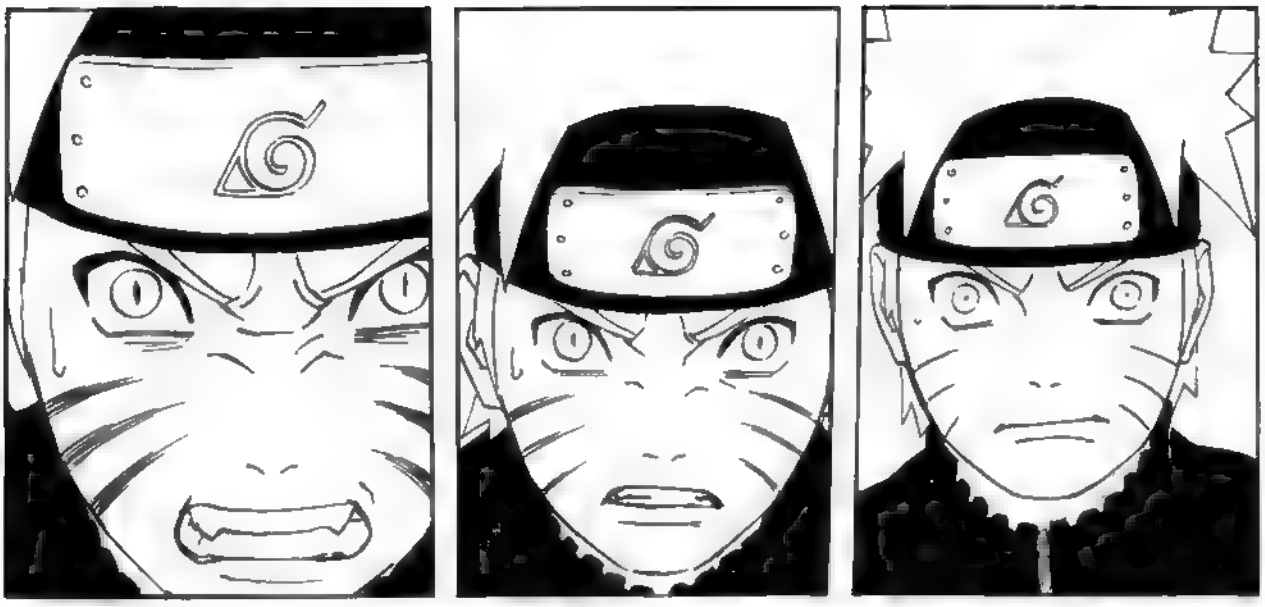

PIP
SKRUNK RNCH
SPLOSH
SPISH
SPASH
SPISH
SPASH
SHK SHK
SHEFF

....!
!
WE'RE TOO LATE...
...
!



SASORI...

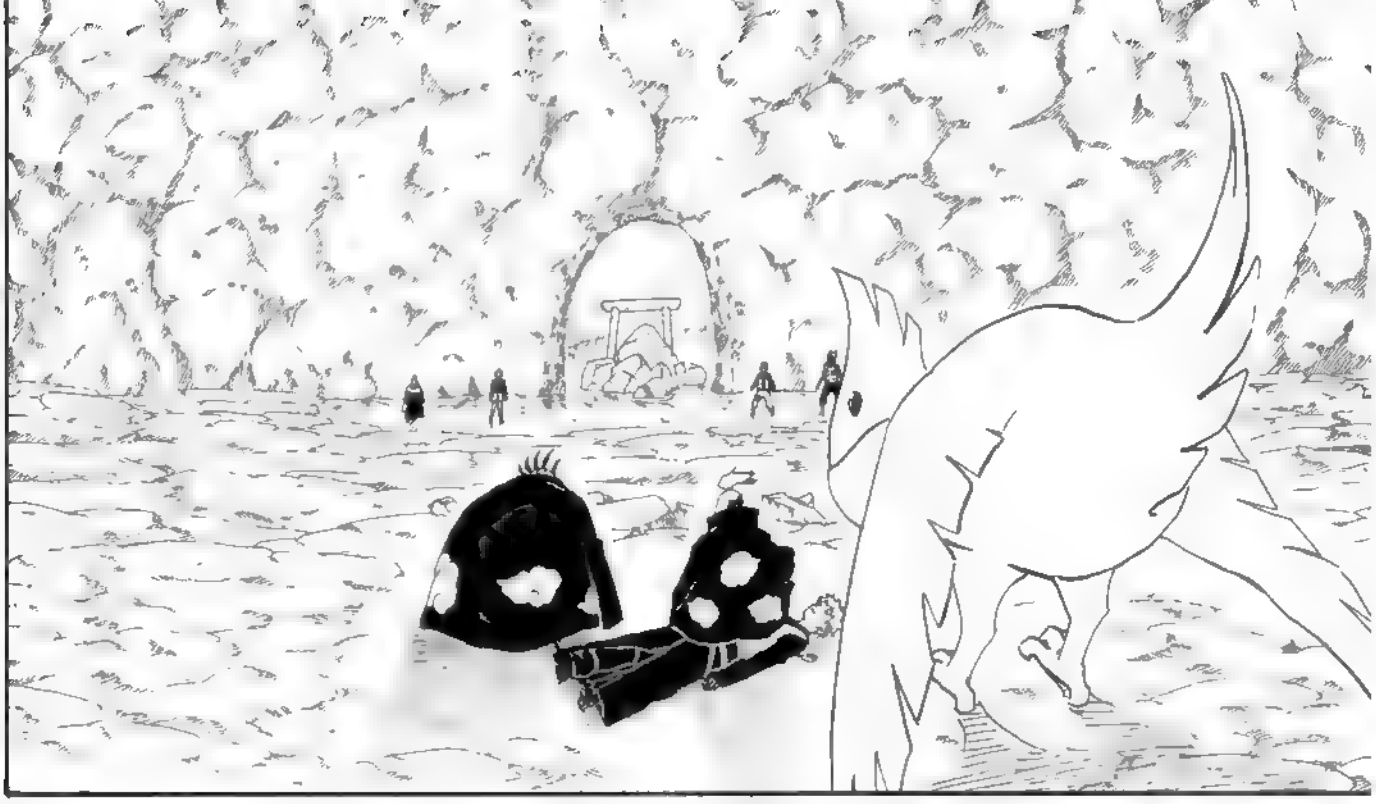
NOW, LET'S SEE... WHICH ONE IS THE JINCHÛRIKI HOST? HMMM?

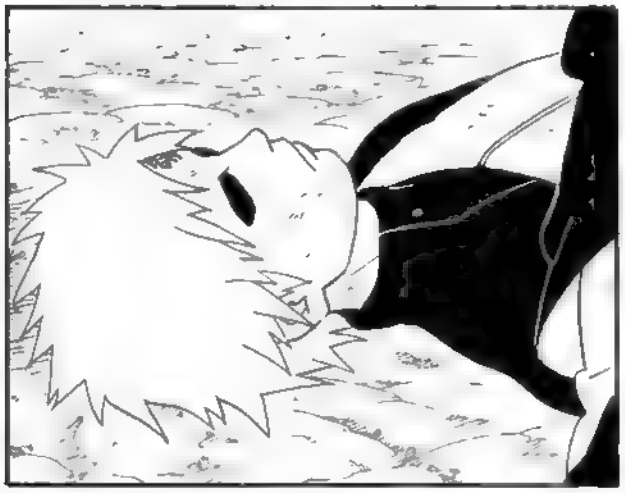


YOU!
YOU'RE DEAD MEAT!!

LOOKS LIKE IT...
THAT WOULD BE HIM, THEN.

Number 264:
Sasori's Masterpiece...!!





...

GET UP!!

GAARA!
WHY ARE YOU JUST LYING THERE?!

NARUTO, STOP.
HEY, GAARA! WHAT ARE YOU, DEAF?!
...
...
YOU KNOW FULL WELL.
...

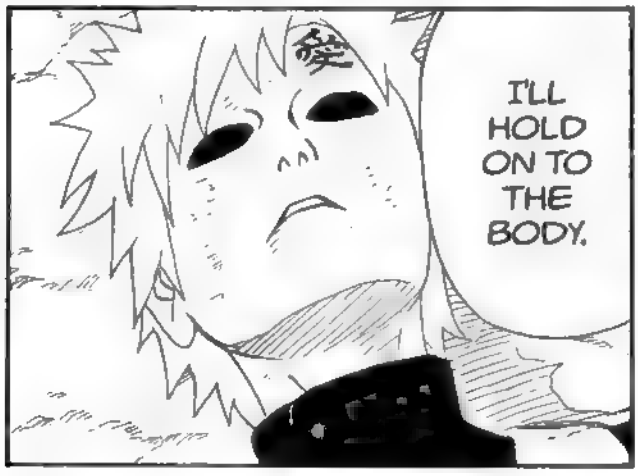
THAT HE'S ALREADY DEAD. HMMM?
INDEED. I SHOULD THINK YOU'D KNOW...

...!
...
GIVE HIM BACK.
...
UNH
GIVE ME GAARA! YOU STINK-ING...!!
SH
AAA

?!
SKFF

CHARGE IN WITHOUT THINKING, AND YOU'LL GET US ALL KILLED.
COOL IT.

URK...


I'LL HOLD ON TO THE BODY.

...

SINCE IT APPEARS...
...THE JINCHÛRIKI HOST IS BURNING FOR IT.

SASORI...
I KNOW THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR, BUT...

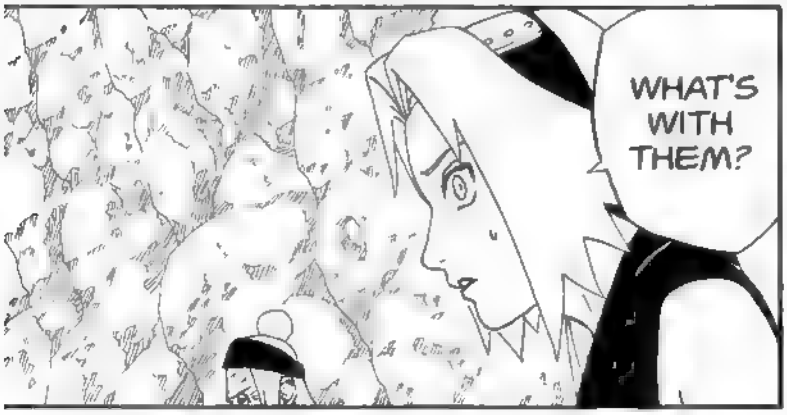
IF I WERE YOU, DEIDARA, I WOULDN'T PUSH MY LUCK.
LISTEN, OUR QUOTA IS ONE APIECE.

I'LL HANDLE THE JINCHÛRIKI HOST.
HMMM?

THIS JINCHŪRIKI HOST OF THE NINE-TAILED FOX... FROM WHAT I HEAR, HE IS FAIRLY STRONG. HMMM?
AN ARTIST MUST ALWAYS SEEK EVER-GREATER STIMULATION...
LEST HIS SENSES TURN DULL.

BUT, IN MY OPINION, ART IS TRANSIENT BEAUTY THAT FADES AFTER JUST A MOMENT. HMM.
QUITE SO, SASORI. AS A FELLOW ARTIST, I CERTAINLY...
...RESPECT YOUR PER-SPECTIVE.

ART IS A WORK OF BEAUTY, CAPTURED AND LEFT FOR POSTERITY... IT IS THE BEAUTY OF ALL ETERNITY.
WHAT? THOSE PYROTECH-NICS OF YOURS... ART?


WHAT'S WITH THEM?

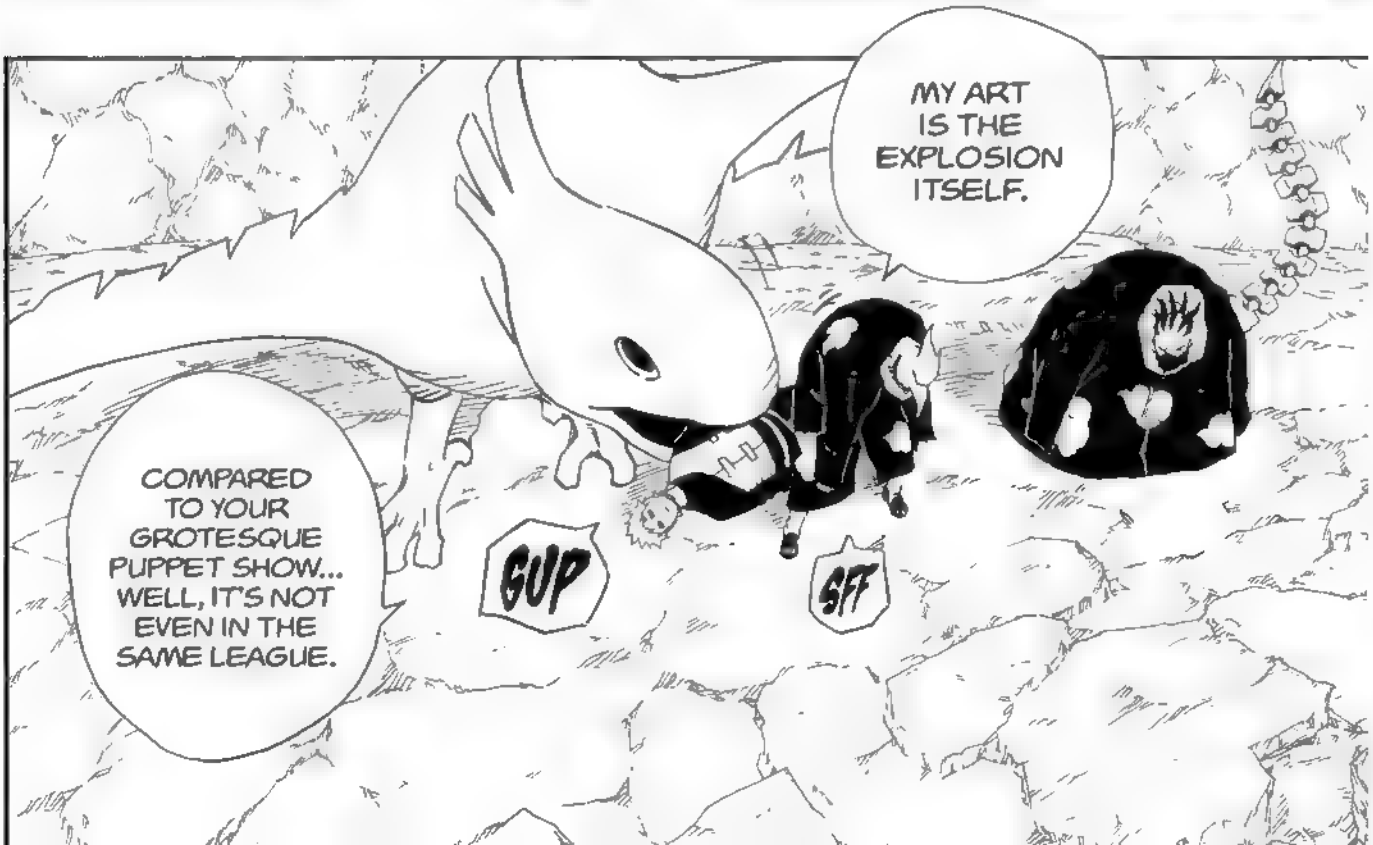
...

SWUF
ENOUGH OF THIS!
FWOO
SH
SWUP
BO
OF

FHO
OH
SKI
SHIK SHIK
CH
UT

DEIDARA, YOU FOOL.
ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE ME ANGRY?
I DID SAY YOU WOULDN'T LIKE IT, DID I NOT? HMMM?
YOU SEE THERE?

AS I FEARED, HIS HANDLING OF THE PUPPET REMAINS UNCHANGED.
GRR..
HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO LOOK.
...


MY ART IS THE EXPLOSION ITSELF.
COMPARED TO YOUR GROTESQUE PUPPET SHOW... WELL, IT'S NOT EVEN IN THE SAME LEAGUE.
GUP
SFT

READ THIS WAY
!
SHWIP
FWUP
TUP
TUP
SEE YA.
SHEESH.

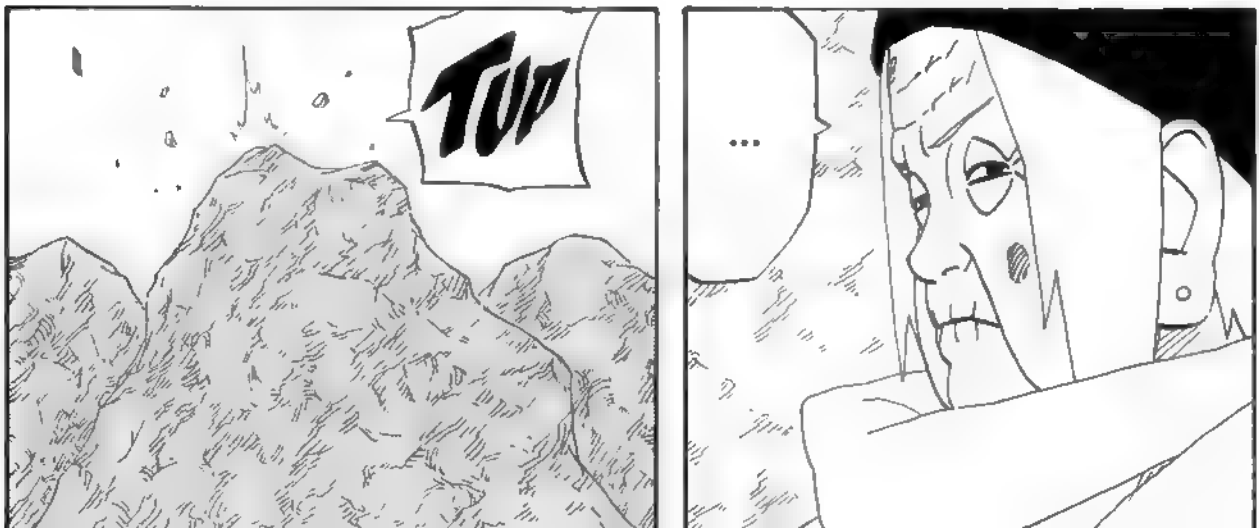
....!
GULP
PUP

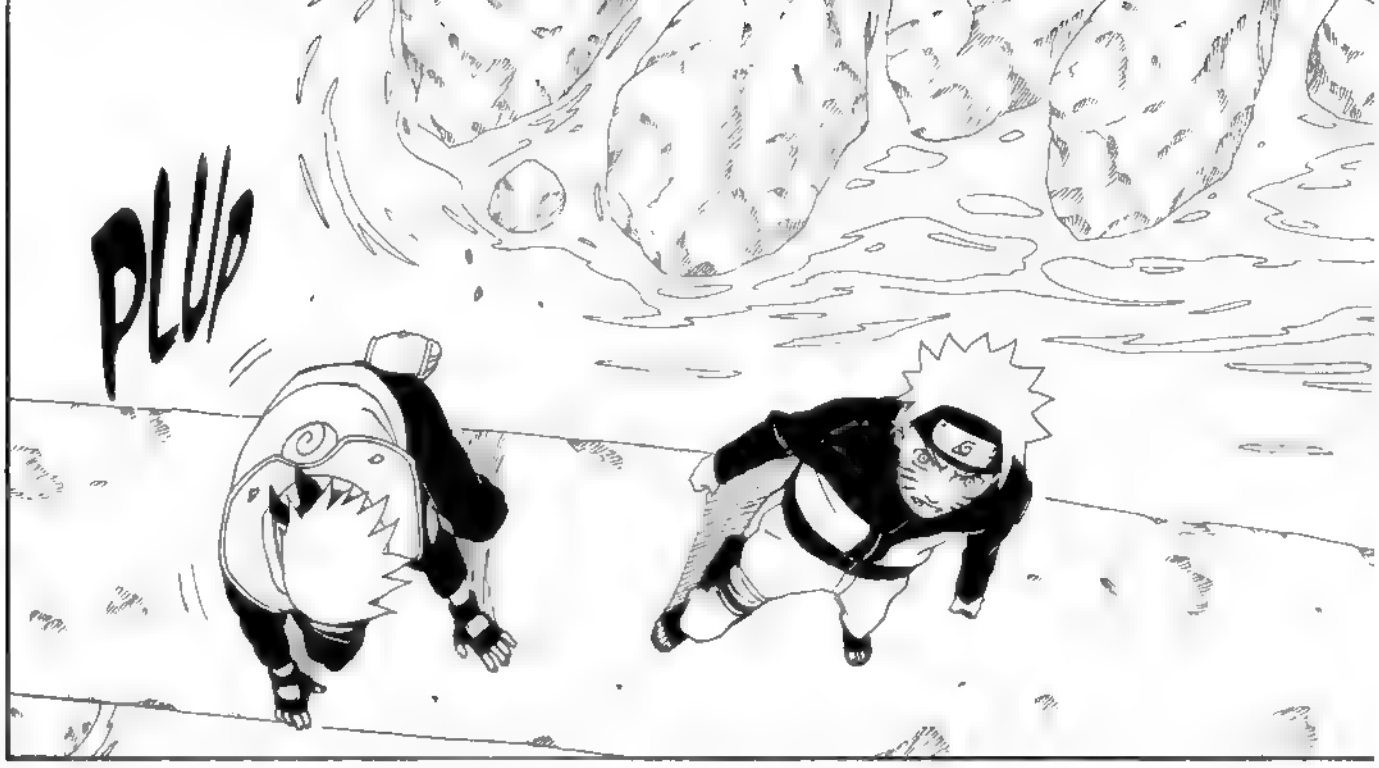
!
SWOOP
!

PERFECT!
HEY! WAIT UP!
PKW PKW

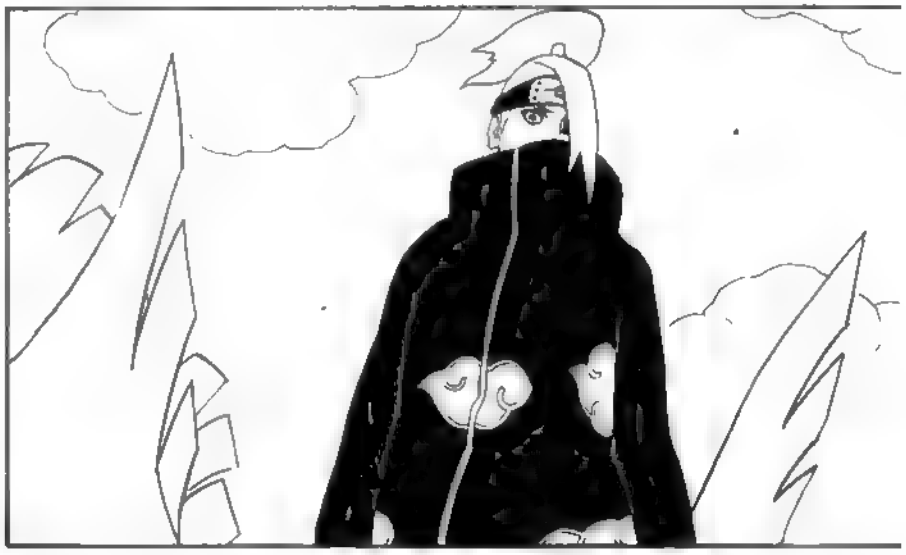
NARUTO AND I WILL HANDLE THE GUY OUTSIDE.
SAKURA AND GRANNY CHIYO, YOU DEAL WITH THIS CREEP.
SPISSH
GRRR... AS ALWAYS, NARUTO & JUST CAN'T HELP HIM-SELF.
ZO
OOH

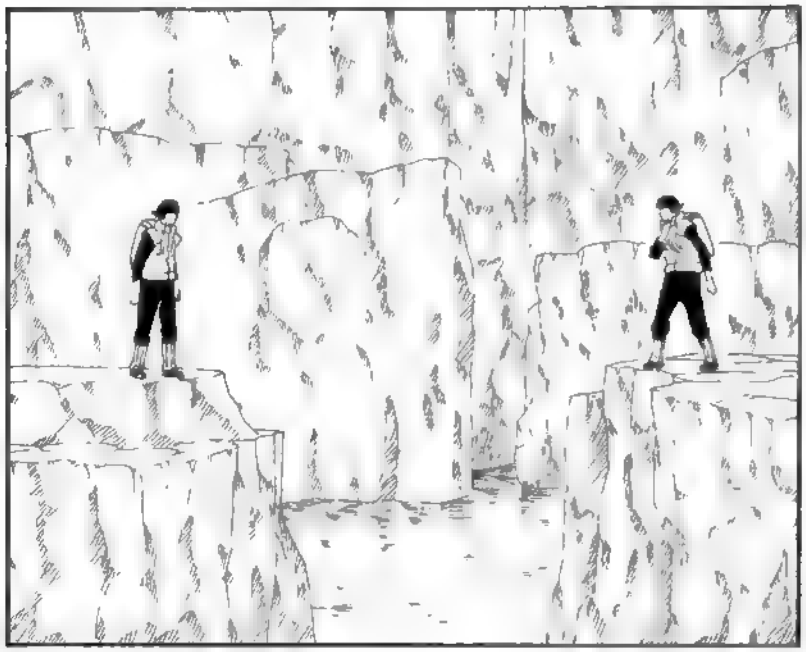
UNDER-STOOD!
WAIT 'TIL TEAM GUY RETURNS.
JUST DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH.


TUP
...

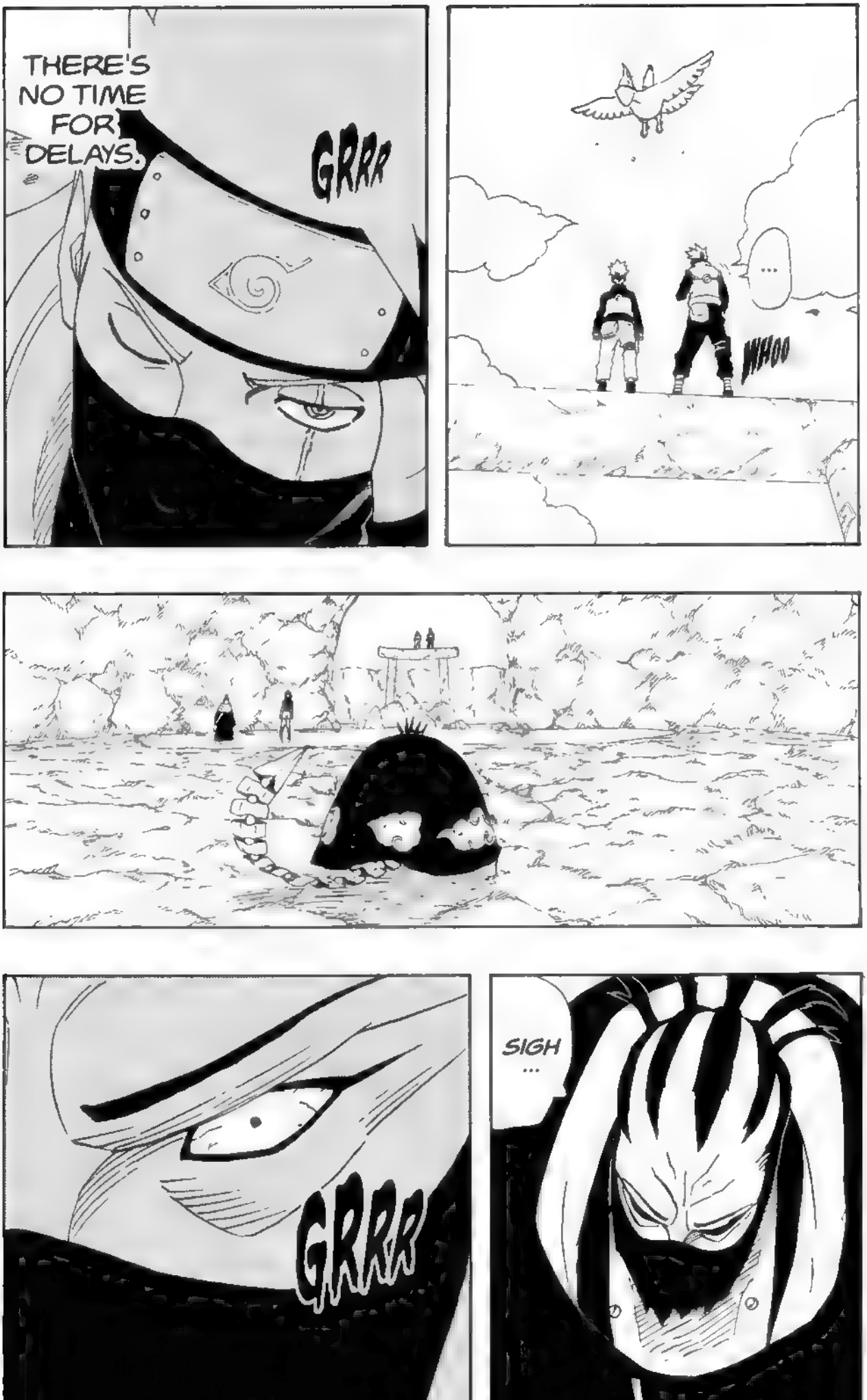

PLUP

GUY, COME IN... CAN YOU RETURN IMMEDI-ATELY?
PIP



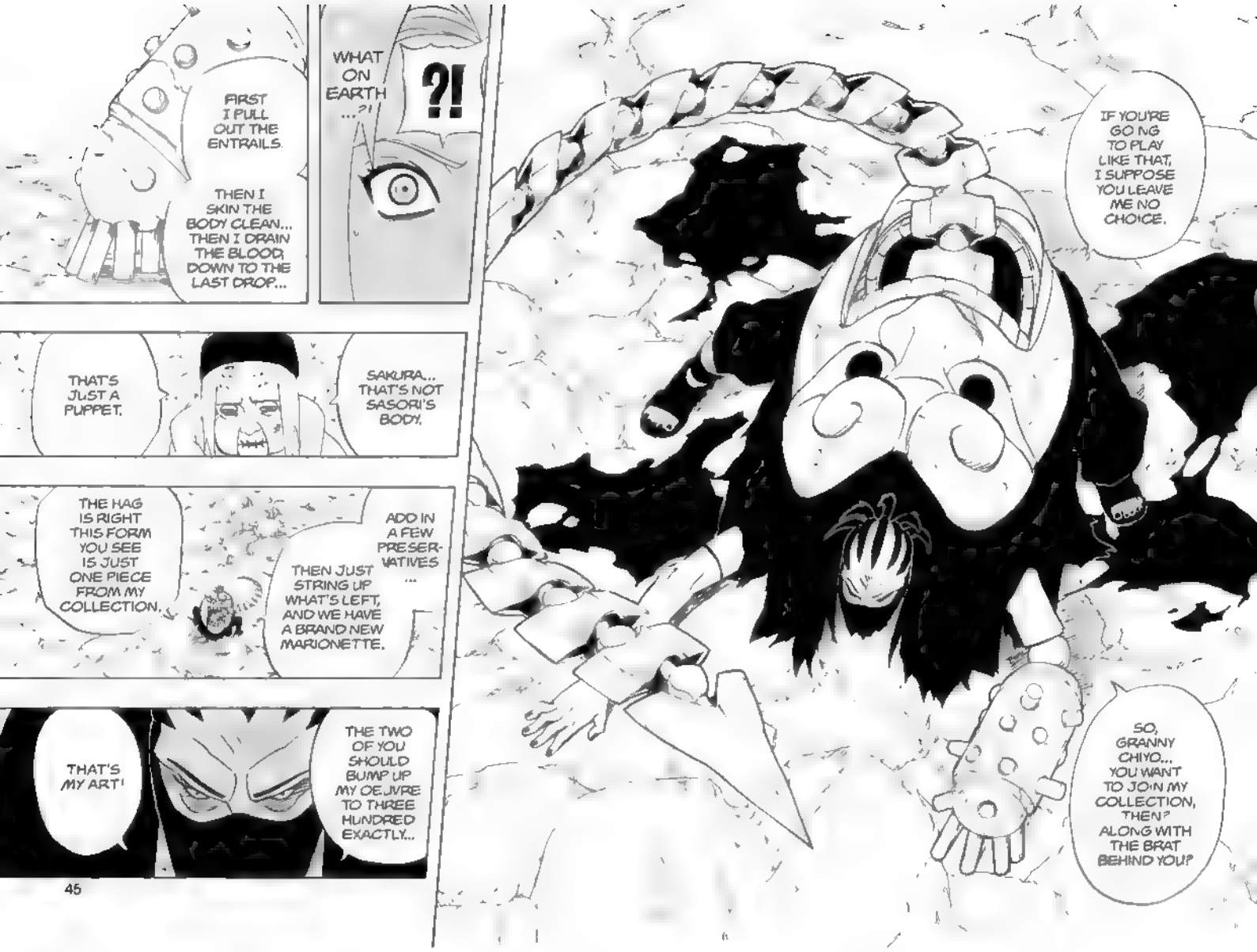


IT'LL TAKE A WHILE.
WE WOULD IF WE COULD... BUT WE'RE A BIT STUCK.
HUF
HUF


THERE'S NO TIME FOR DELAYS.
GRRR
...
WHOO
GRRR
SIGH
...

AND IN... OUR DEATH TOLLS.
...THE HUGE DIFFER-ENCE IN OUR EXPERI-ENCE...
JUST FACING HIM LIKE THIS, I CAN SENSE...
SHIT
I'M HERE WITH YOU.
SAKURA... BE BRAVE.
SHIT
!
STAY BEHIND AND WATCH.
SHRUFF
SHKLING
FIP
FIP
FIP
FIP

READ THIS WAY
FWISSH
FWFF
TING
TING
TING
TING
TING
TOK
TOK
TOK
KAKINK
...
SHRIP
SHRIP SHRAK
...?!


FIRST I PULL OUT THE ENTRAILS.
THEN I SKIN THE BODY CLEAN... THEN I DRAIN THE BLOOD, DOWN TO THE LAST DROP...
WHAT ON EARTH ...?!
?!
THAT'S JUST A PUPPET.
SAKURA... THAT'S NOT SASORI'S BODY.
THE HAG IS RIGHT THIS FORM YOU SEE IS JUST ONE PIECE FROM MY COLLECTION.
THEN JUST STRING UP WHAT'S LEFT, AND WE HAVE A BRAND NEW MARIONETTE.
ADD IN A FEW PRESER-VATIVES ...
THAT'S MY ART!
THE TWO OF YOU SHOULD BUMP UP MY OEUVRE TO THREE HUNDRED EXACTLY...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY LIKE THAT, I SUPPOSE YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE.
SO, GRANNY CHIYO... YOU WANT TO JOIN MY COLLECTION, THEN? ALONG WITH THE BRAT BEHIND YOU?

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
PERSONAL HISTORY: A TRIP ABROAD

ALTHOUGH THE COLLEGE I ATTENDED WASN'T THAT AMAZING, IT DID OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT OVERSEAS ART MUSEUMS. THE TRIP WASN'T MANDATORY OR ANYTHING, SO I WASN'T PLANNING TO SIGN UP. THERE SEEMED LITTLE POINT IN TRAVELING ABROAD JUST TO VISIT ART MUSEUMS. BESIDES, IT WAS SUPER EXPENSIVE. THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD SWING IT ON A PART-TIME JOB. STILL, MY FATHER INSISTED THAT I SHOULD GO, RATTLING ON ABOUT COLLEGE AND TREASURED MEMORIES. HE'D EVEN PAY FOR IT HIMSELF, HE SAID. IF I HADN'T ACCEPTED, I MIGHT'VE GIVEN HIM A CONNIPTION. (AS A FATHER HE JUST HAD TO BITE THE BULLET. THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD TELL HIS SON IT WAS TOO EXPENSIVE TO GO.)

THE TOUR BROUGHT US TO SPAIN AND FRANCE. IN SPAIN, THERE WAS ONE MUSEUM I WAS PARTICULARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING. WHEN WE GOT THERE, THOUGH, THEY WOULDN'T LET US IN. THEY TOLD US THEY'D JUST FOUND A BAG CONTAINING EXPLOSIVES. SO ALL WE WOUND UP SEEING WAS A BOMB SQUAD.

WHEN WE GOT TO FRANCE, I MADE A BEELINE FOR THE MONA LISA. I FIGURED, HEY, AFTER SPENDING SO MUCH MONEY ON THE TRIP, I SHOULD AT LEAST GET A GLIMPSE OF THE REAL MCCOY. THE PAINTING WAS SO POPULAR THAT IT HAD AMASSED A HUGE WALL OF PEOPLE, BLOCKING ANY VIEW. UNDAUNTED IN MY QUEST, I WAITED FOR AN OPENING. THE MOMENT A PERSON SHUFFLED AWAY, I DASHED FOR HIS PLACE. "AH, SO THIS IS THE MONA LISA!" NOT THAT I KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT THE PAINTING, REALLY, BUT I STILL ACTED LIKE IT TOUCHED ME.

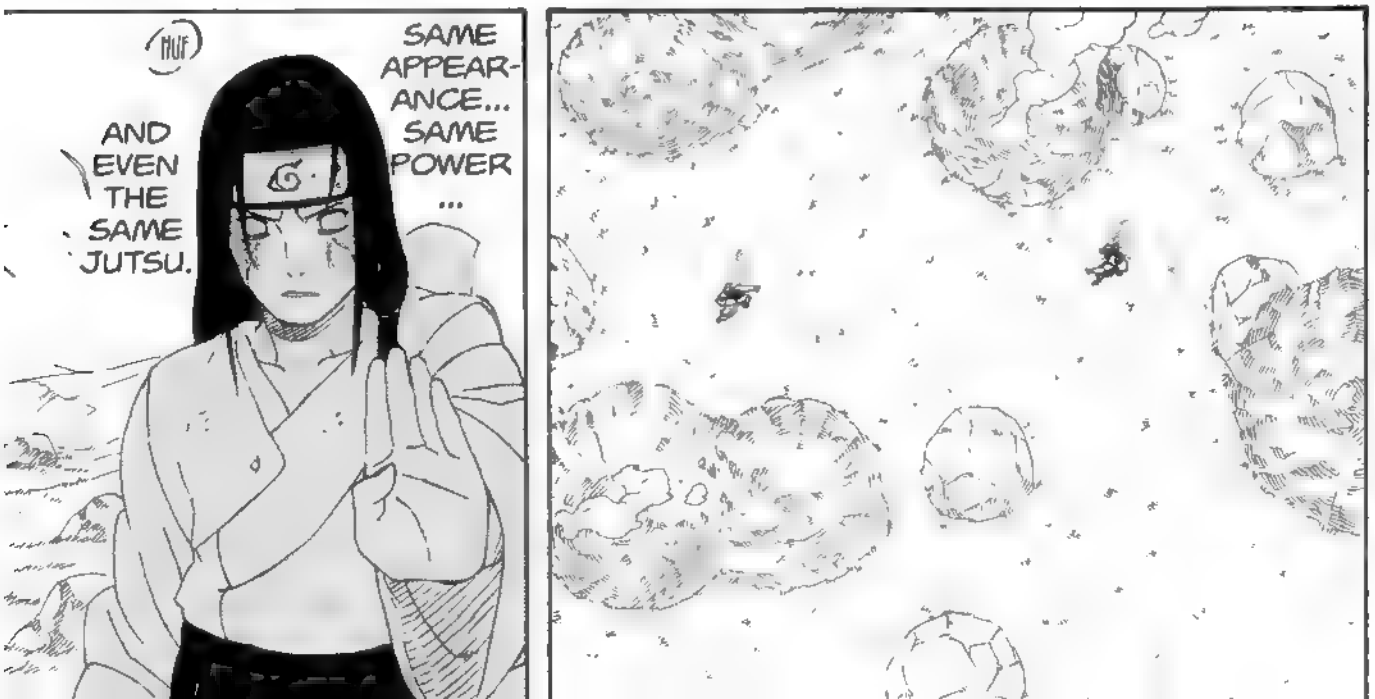
AFTER A MOMENT OF GAWKING UP AT IT, I FELT THIS INTENSE PAIN ON MY CHEEK. "*YOWCH!*" FALLING TO THE GROUND, I REFLEXIVELY LOOKED BACK, ONLY TO SEE... AN OLD WOMAN. THIS WELL-BUILT, ELDERLY FOREIGN LADY, HER FIST STILL RETRACTING. A FIST! WELL, TWO GUESSES WHAT HAD STRUCK ME. I GUESS SHE NEEDED THIS GUY'S HEAD OUT OF THE WAY TO GET A BETTER VIEW.

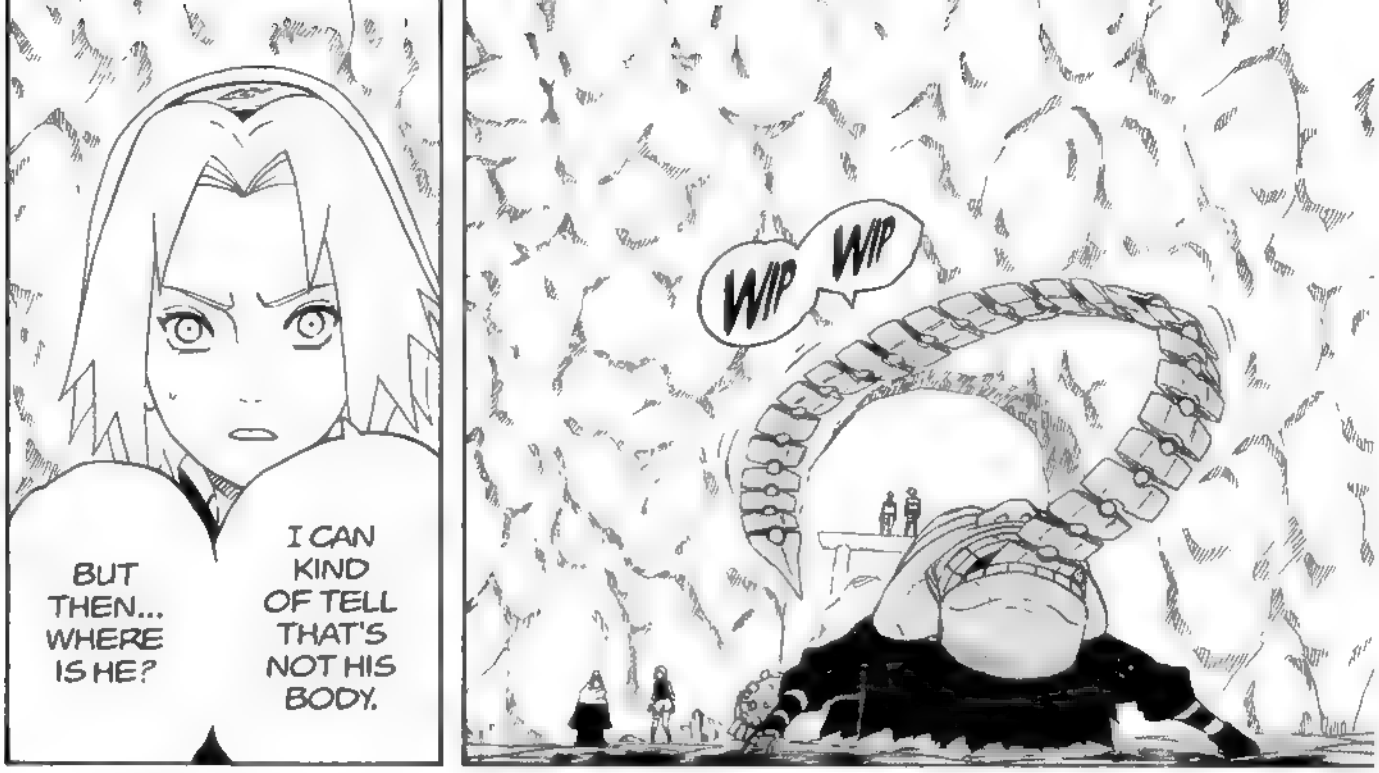
SO, WELL, IF I SUM UP MY TREASURED MEMORY OF THIS TRIP ABROAD, IT GOES LIKE THIS: BEING PUNCHED DOWN BY A LITTLE OLD FOREIGN LADY RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE MONA LISA AFTER SPENDING A LOT OF MONEY TO SEE IT. THE OLD BIRD JUST STOOD THERE, TAKING SNAPSHOT AFTER SNAPSHOT OF THE PAINTING, EVEN THOUGH CAMERAS WERE PROHIBITED. NO MATTER WHAT COUNTRY THEY'RE FROM, IT SEEMS OLD WOMEN ARE ALWAYS FRIGHTENING.

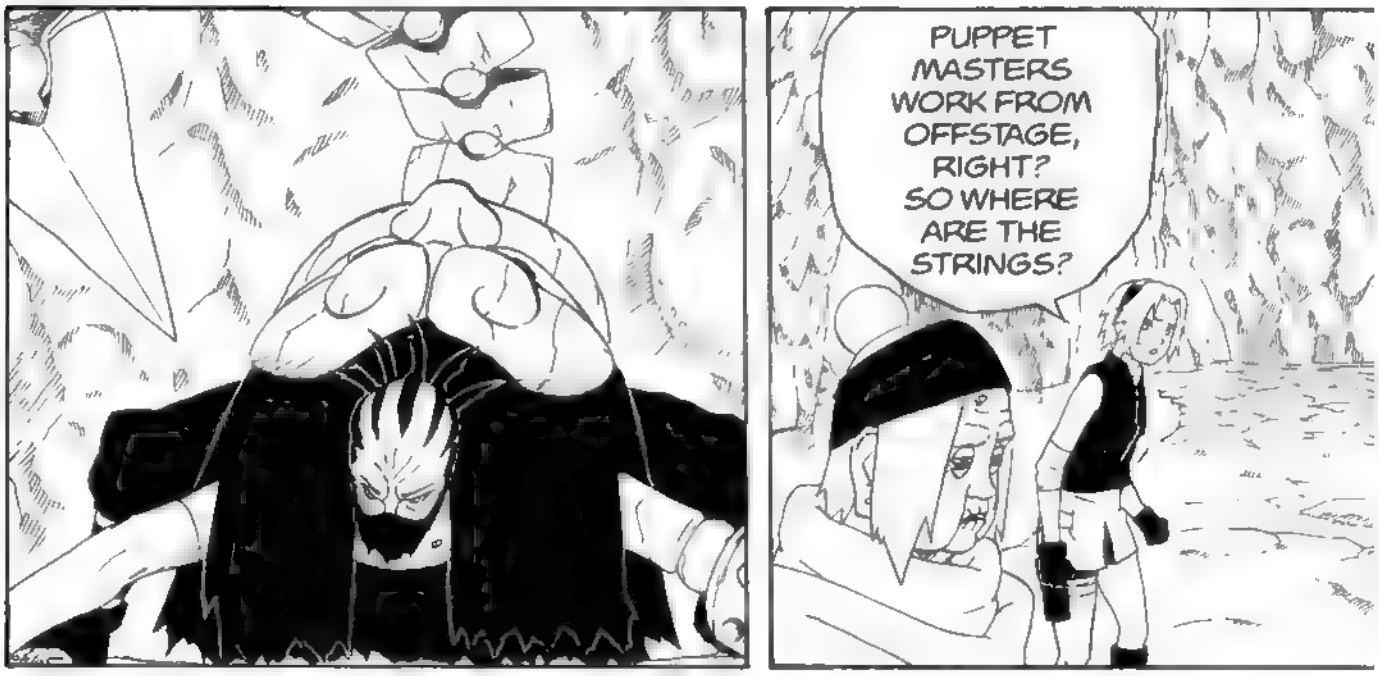
Number 265: Granny Chiyo & Sakura

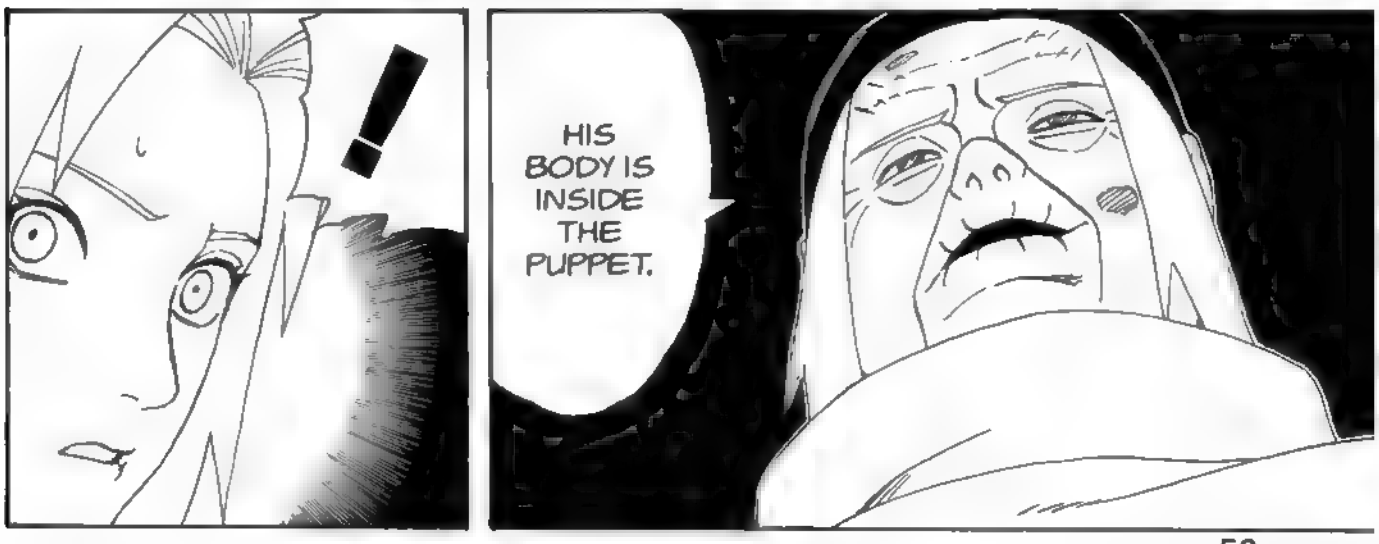
SPARK
URG... THIS MOVE ...

HUF
HUF
TOK
TOK
CHINNNG
SPAK KAK PAK
PAM PAM
KRAK


HUF
AND EVEN THE SAME JUTSU.
SAME APPEAR-ANCE... SAME POWER ...


I CAN KIND OF TELL THAT'S NOT HIS BODY.
BUT THEN... WHERE IS HE?
WIP WIP

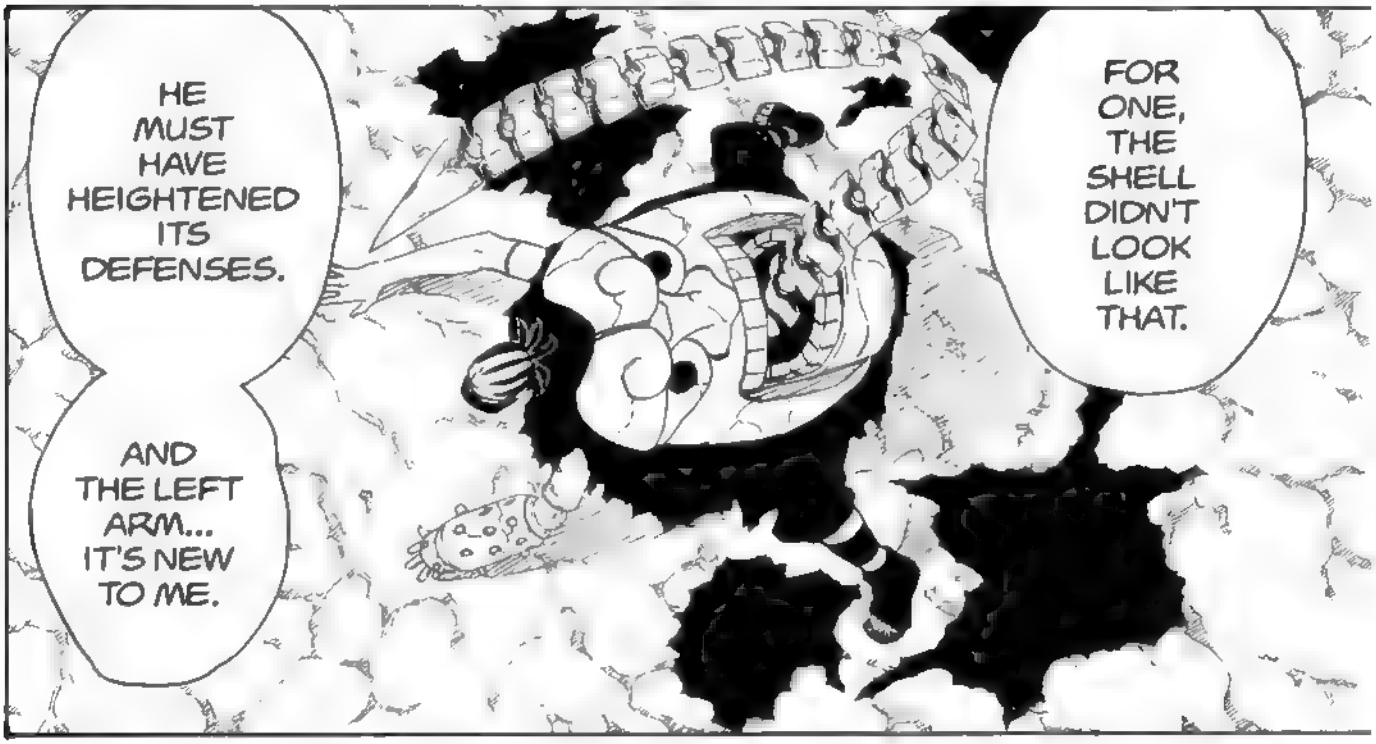

PUPPET MASTERS WORK FROM OFFSTAGE, RIGHT? SO WHERE ARE THE STRINGS?


!
HIS BODY IS INSIDE THE PUPPET.

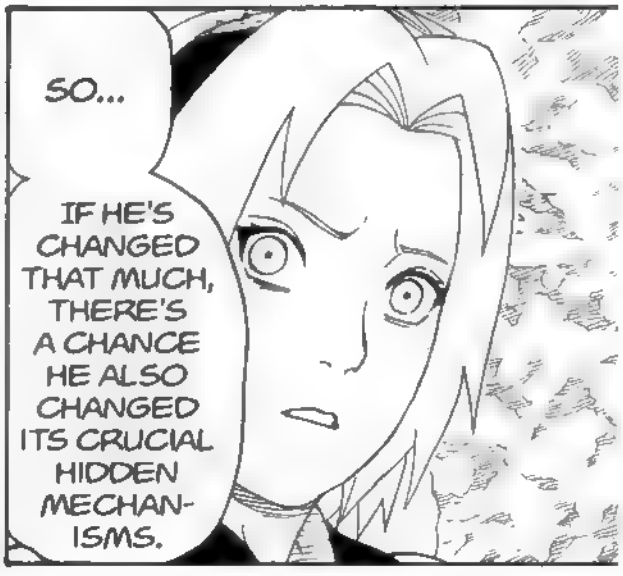
IT'S SASORI'S FAVORITE PUPPET.
I'M FAMILIAR WITH IT. IT'S CALLED HIRUKO.
IT SERVES AS HIS ARMOR...
...AND AS HIS WEAPON.
PUPPET MASTERS AREN'T SO GOOD WITH CLOSE COMBAT...
SINCE FUSSING WITH THEIR MARIONETTES LEAVES THEM WIDE OPEN TO ATTACK.
TO OVER-COME THAT WEAKNESS, HE CREATED THIS PUPPET.
...IS ITS MECHANISM. WE DON'T KNOW HOW OR FROM WHERE IT MAY LAUNCH ITS ATTACK.
WHAT MAKES THIS PUPPET FORMID-ABLE...
WELL...
OKAY, SO... HOW DO WE FIGHT HIM?
UNTIL WE DRAG SASORI OUT OF HIRUKO, THERE'S NO POINT.
WE HAVE THE ADVAN-TAGE.
BUT GRANNY, YOU KNOW HOW HIRUKO FUNCTIONS INSIDE OUT.
BUT... IT SEEMS THAT WILL NOT BE THE CASE.
INDEED... THAT'S WHY AT FIRST I THOUGHT I COULD DEAL WITH HIM ON MY OWN.

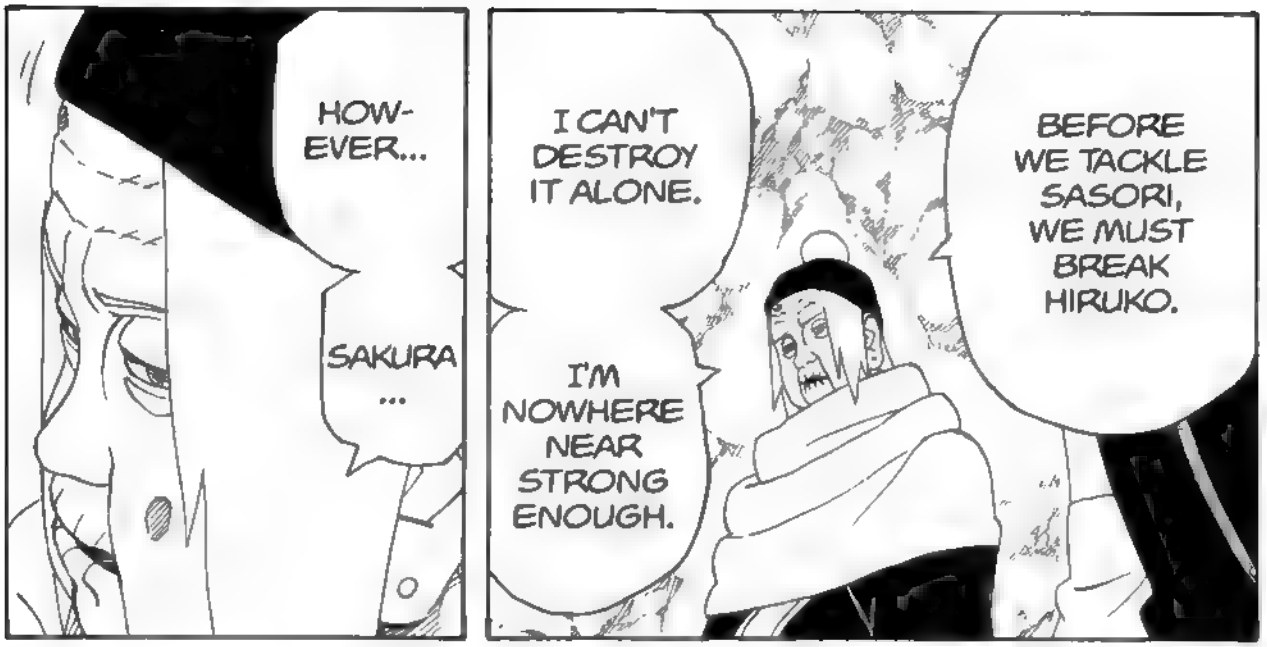
...SINCE I SAW IT LAST.
HIRUKO HAS CHANGED SOME-WHAT...

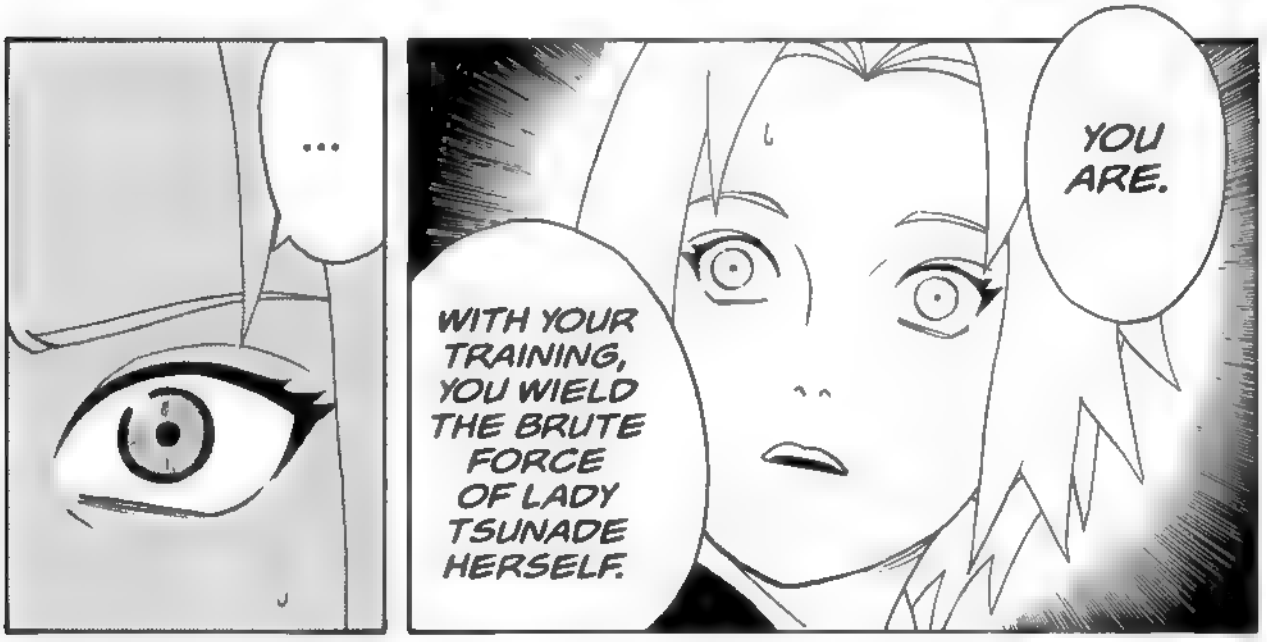
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
?!


HE MUST HAVE HEIGHTENED ITS DEFENSES.
AND THE LEFT ARM... IT'S NEW TO ME.
FOR ONE, THE SHELL DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THAT.

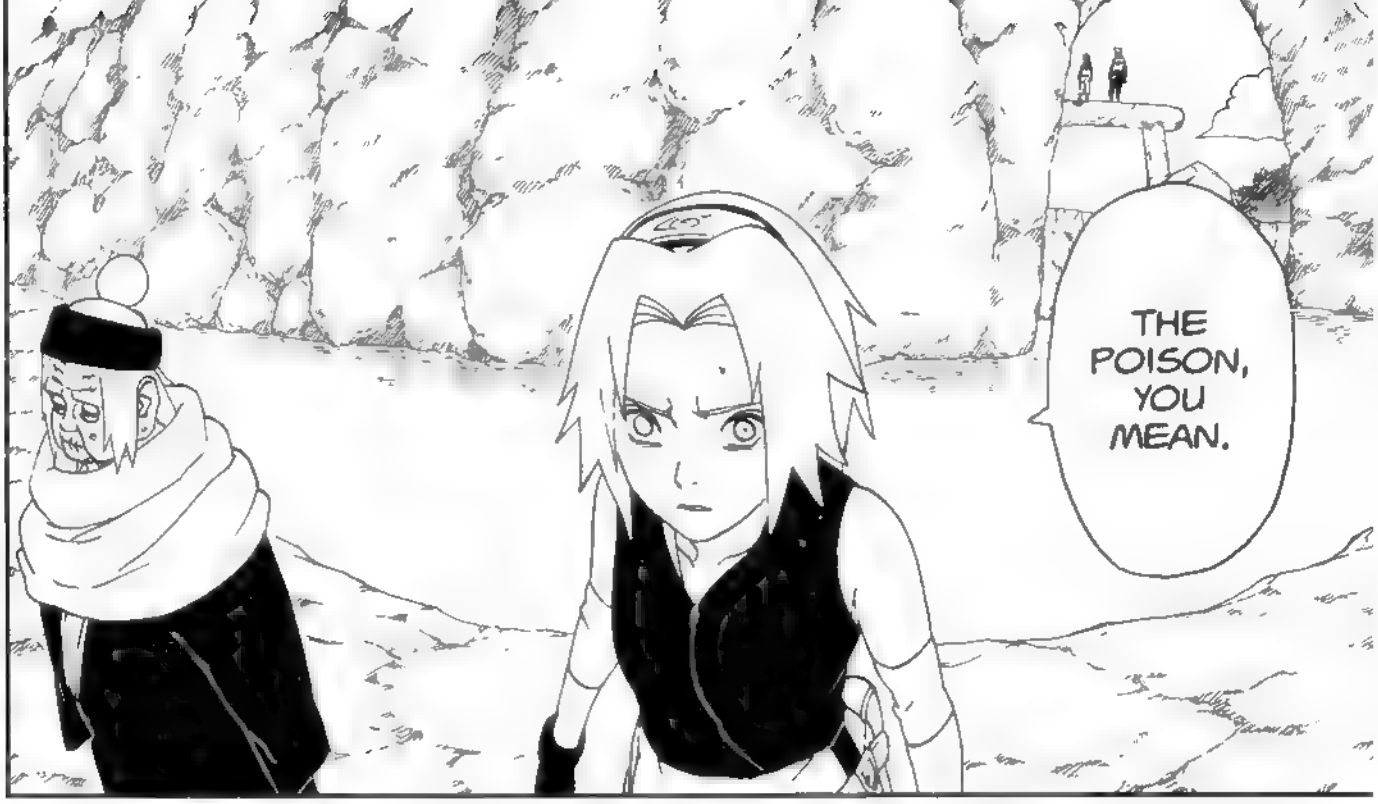
...
SO HOW DO WE FIGHT IT?


SO...
IF HE'S CHANGED THAT MUCH, THERE'S A CHANCE HE ALSO CHANGED ITS CRUCIAL HIDDEN MECHAN-ISMS.

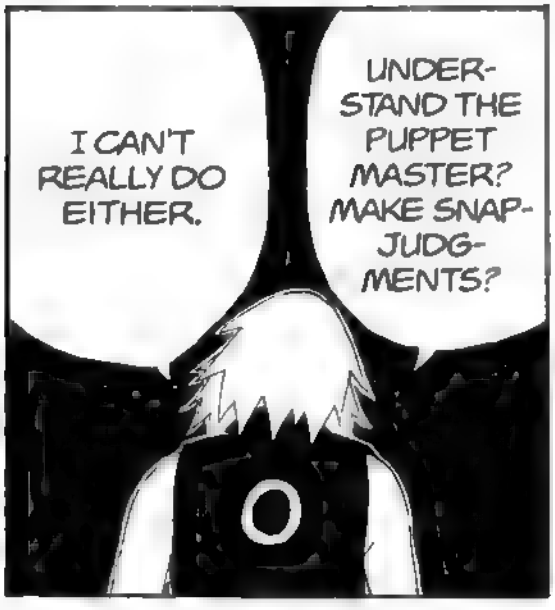

HOW-EVER...
SAKURA...
I CAN'T DESTROY IT ALONE.
I'M NOWHERE NEAR STRONG ENOUGH.
BEFORE WE TACKLE SASORI, WE MUST BREAK HIRUKO.


...
WITH YOUR TRAINING, YOU WIELD THE BRUTE FORCE OF LADY TSUNADE HERSELF.
YOU ARE.

GULP
THE CATCH IS, YOU MUST DODGE EVERY ATTACK IT PUTS FORTH.
THE FIRST STEP IS TO GET CLOSE AND SHATTER THE PUPPET.
NOW, LISTEN CARE-FULLY.


THE POISON, YOU MEAN.

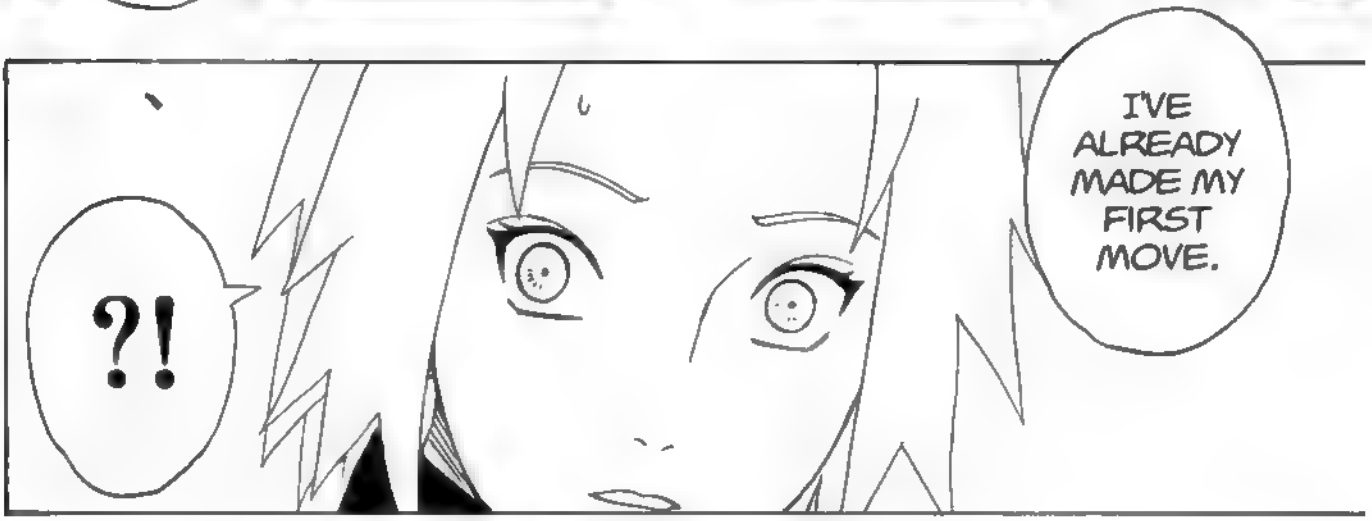
THAT'S RIGHT.
EVEN A SCRATCH WILL PROVE FATAL.

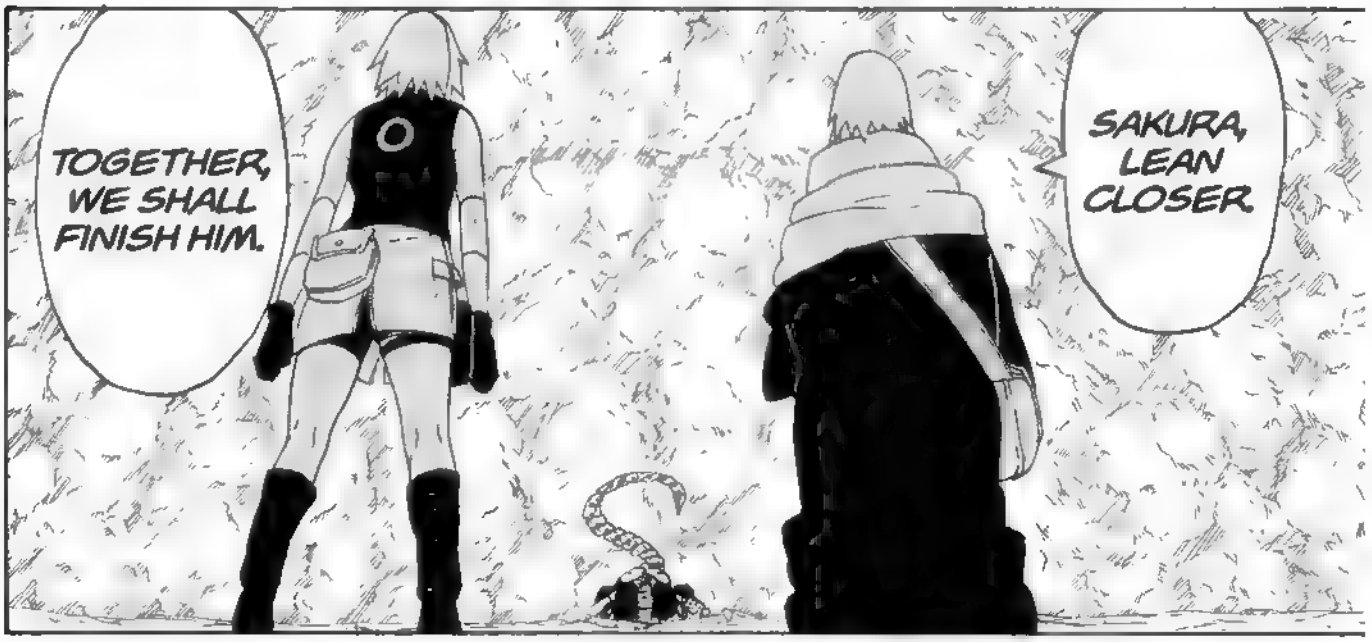

I CAN'T REALLY DO EITHER.
UNDER-STAND THE PUPPET MASTER? MAKE SNAP-JUDG-MENTS?

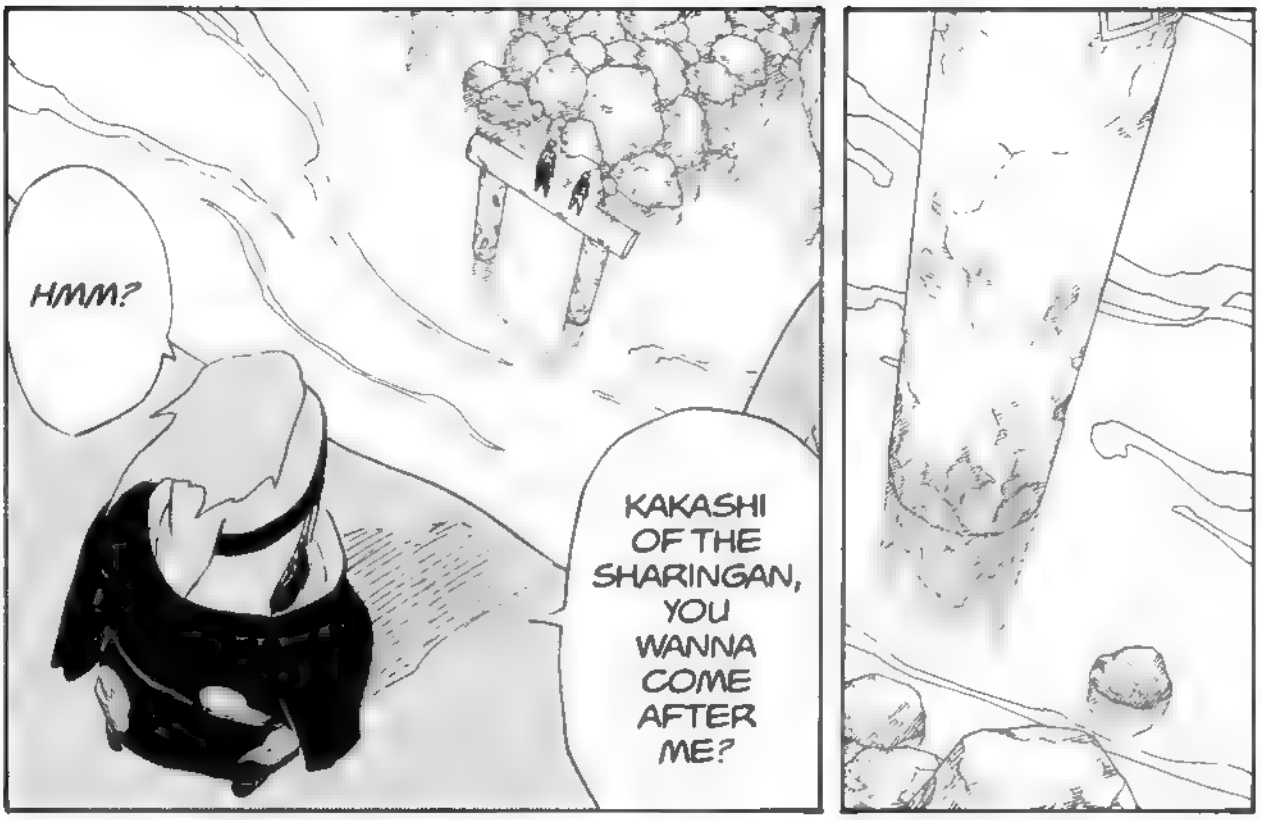
YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE PUPPET MASTER'S STYLE.
YOU MUST ANTICIPATE HIS MOVES INSTANTLY.
TO EVADE ATTACK ...

THEN... HOW...?
TRUE.
THESE THINGS TAKE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.
A HELP-LESS OLD WOMAN?
OR...
SHFF
I WONDER WHAT YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME.
...
SHRUFF
...

JUST COUNT ON ME... THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
HIS EXPERIENCE DOESN'T EVEN COMPARE TO MINE.
BESIDES ...


I'VE ALREADY MADE MY FIRST MOVE.
?!

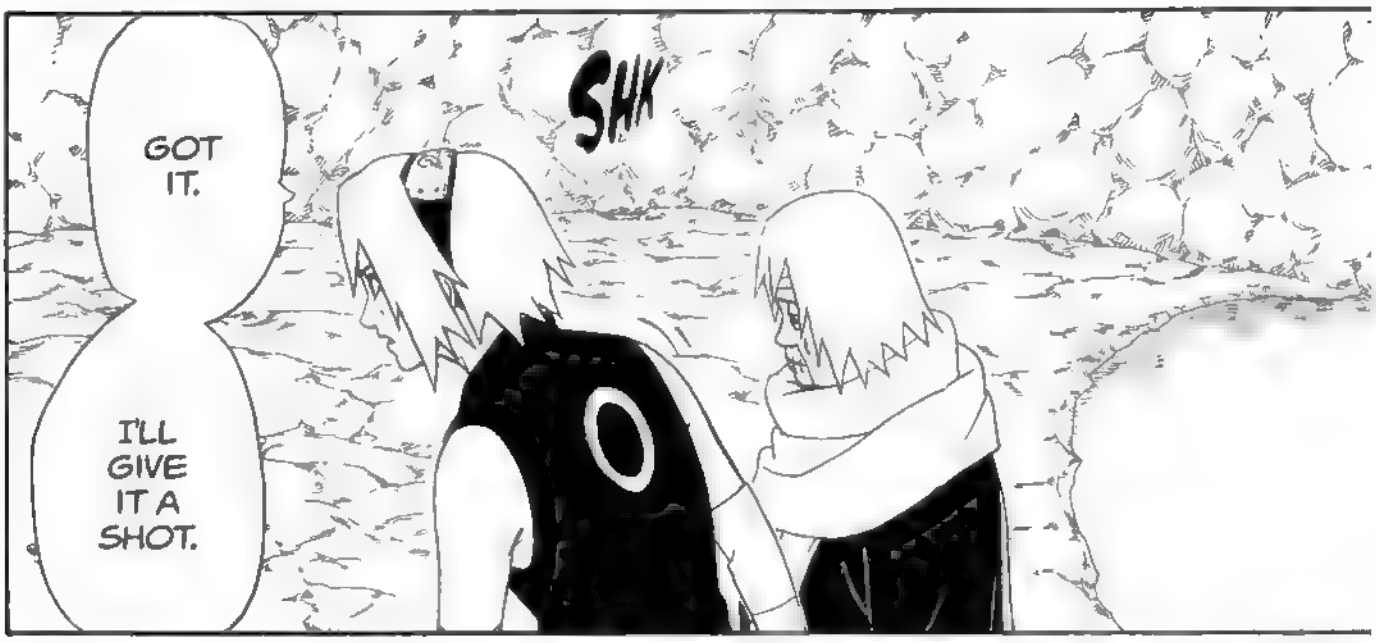

SAKURA, LEAN CLOSER.
TOGETHER, WE SHALL FINISH HIM.


HMM?
KAKASHI OF THE SHARINGAN, YOU WANNA COME AFTER ME?

...
SASORI IS STRONGER THAN I... PROBABLY... YEAH.
I'M SURE I SHOULDN'T SAY THIS, BUT...

HMPH.
I'LL RESCUE GAARA.
MASTER, PLEASE GO HELP SAKURA.

...


SHK
GOT IT.
I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT.

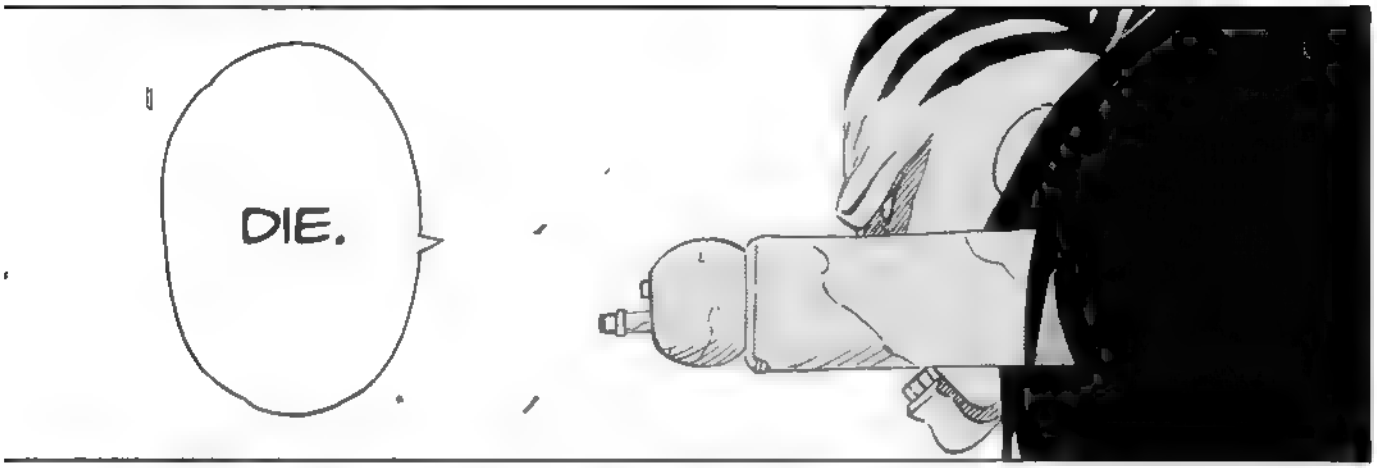
DON'T WORRY... WE'LL WASTE NO TIME...
...IN KILLING YOU!
I HATE WAITING. YOU MUST KNOW THAT.
ARE WE ALL READY?
SHF

FWOO
SH
HMPH.
HOOO
!
!
PAKKA-KAKKA
GRAKKA

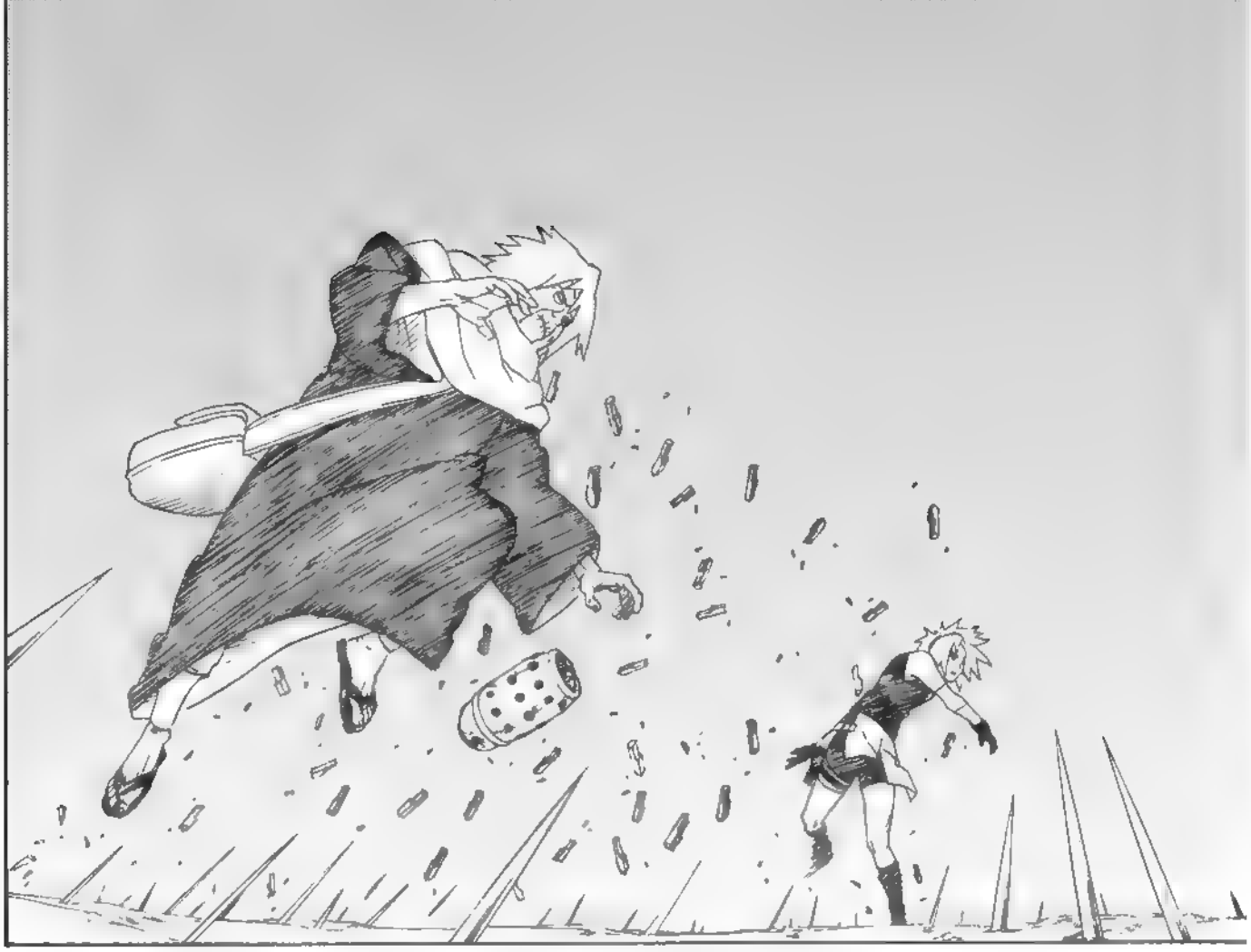
WSH
WSH
WSH
KRK
KRK
FWSH
SK
SS
H
KRK
KRK
KRK

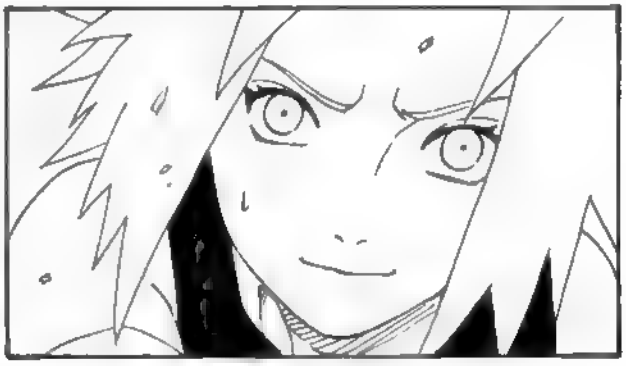
!
!

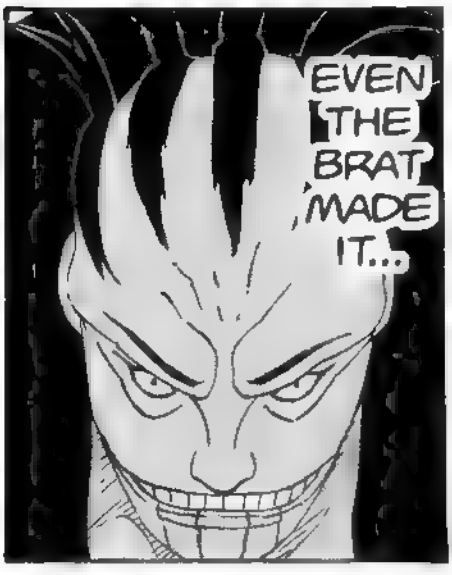
FWOO


DIE.

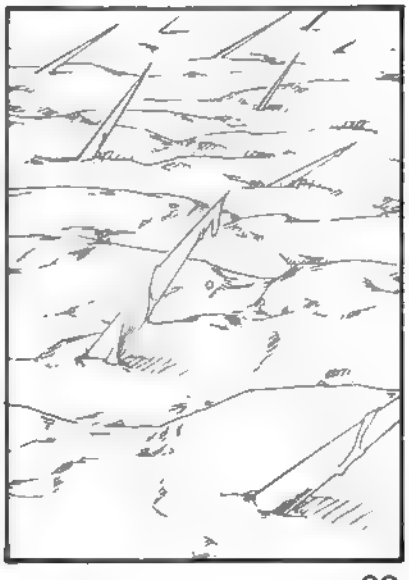
SHA-KA-KA-KA-KA






EVEN THE BRAT MADE IT...

....!



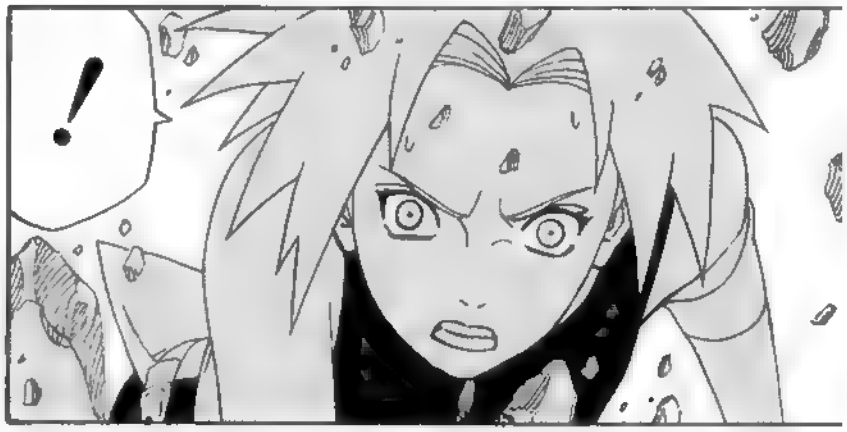
READ THIS WAY
BUT HOW...?
FOOSH
!!
OF COURSE! THE OLD BAG...
CHOK

YES!!
STRIKE IT DOWN!!
SAKURA, NOW!
SMASH
KASSH

Number 266: Sasori Revealed...!!

KRAK
RAK
RAK
RAK

...


!

!
FSSH

WHUM
SKRRT
...COULD DODGE MY ATTACK.
NO WONDER EVEN THE KID...
I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED NO LESS... FROM MY OWN GRANNY.
THAT'S HIS REAL BODY?!
...?!

THE CAT IS OUT OF THE BAG.

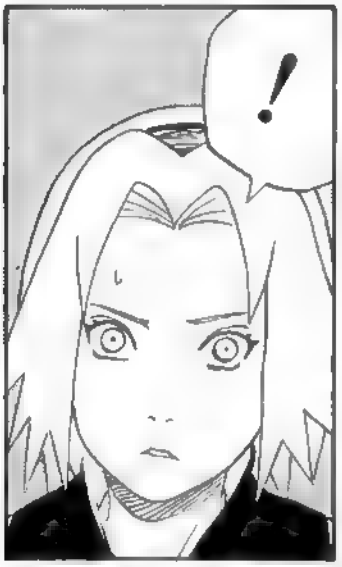
STEERING HER WITH THREADS OF CHAKRA.
THE WITCH WHO CAN READ MY MOVES WAS...

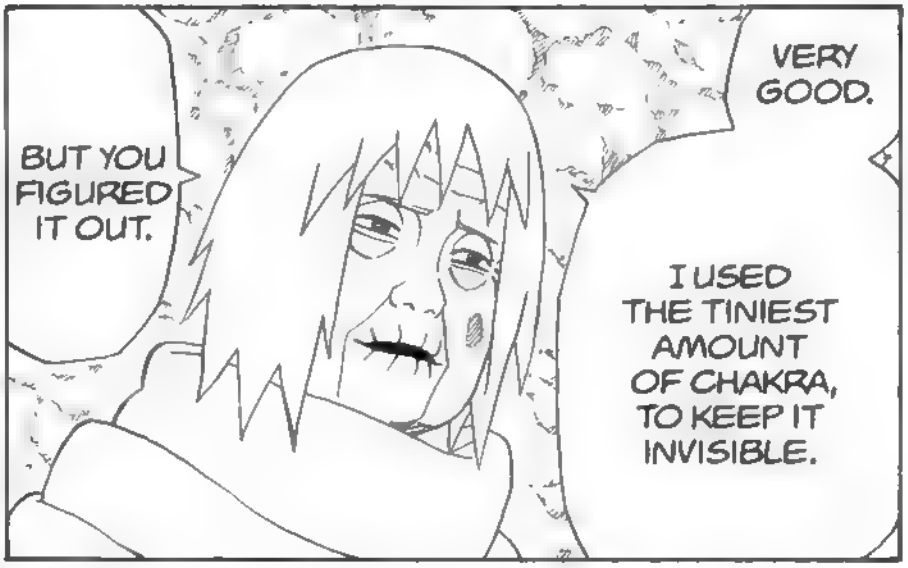
CHOK
I NOTICED ONLY WHEN THE TAIL STALLED ON ME.

YOU TOOK CONTROL OF HIRUKO'S TAIL WHILE YOU WERE AT IT.

AND MORE-OVER...

THE THREAD WAS TIED TO THE KNIFE THAT STRUCK THE TAIL.
TOK
YOU DID IT WHEN YOU THREW THOSE KUNAI KNIVES.
SHKT
FTF
FTF

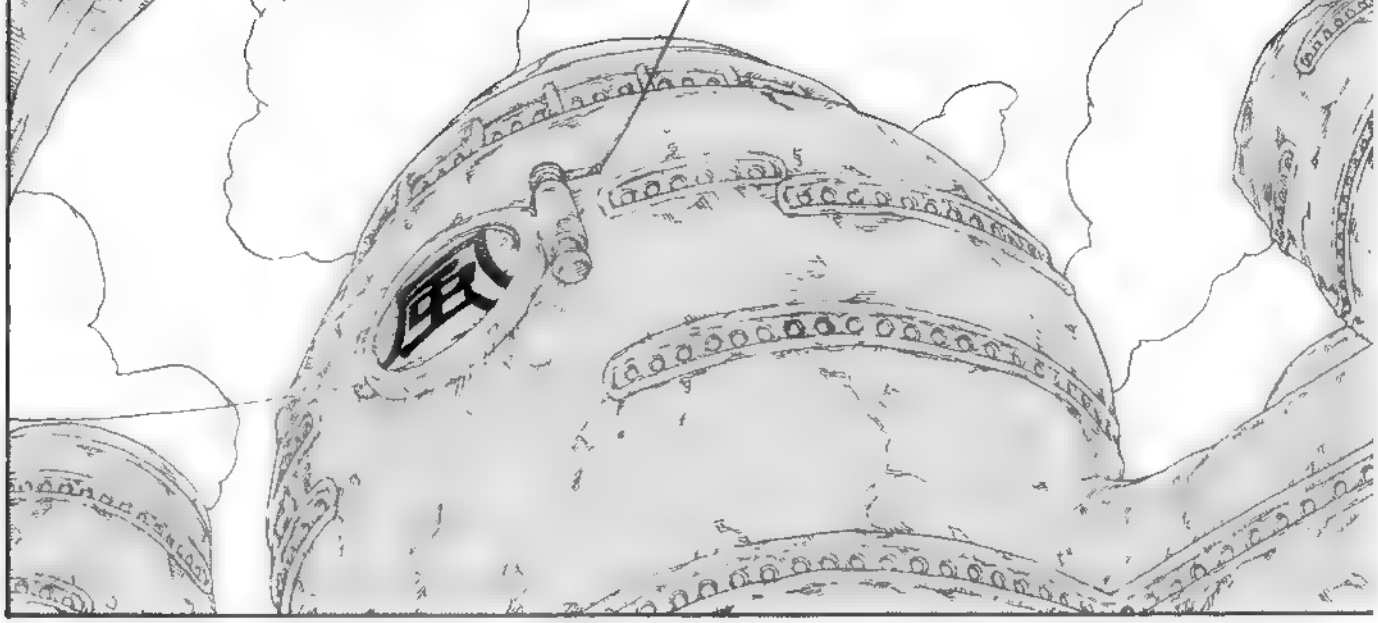

!


VERY GOOD.
BUT YOU FIGURED IT OUT.
I USED THE TINIEST AMOUNT OF CHAKRA, TO KEEP IT INVISIBLE.

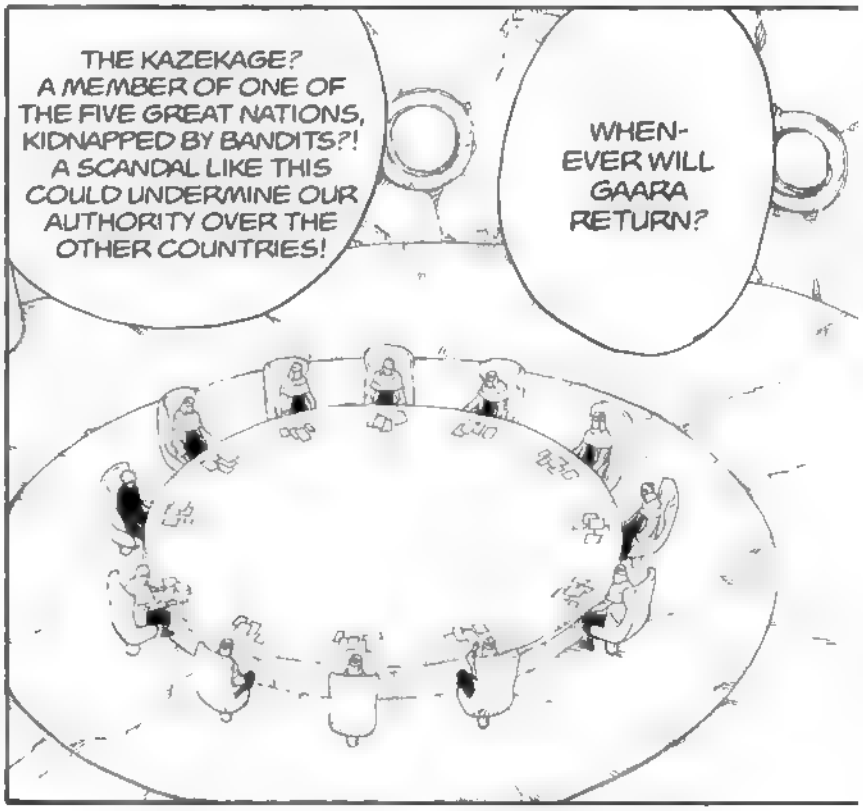
FLU
PP

BUT ANYWAY... PLAY-TIME IS OVER.
INDEED ...

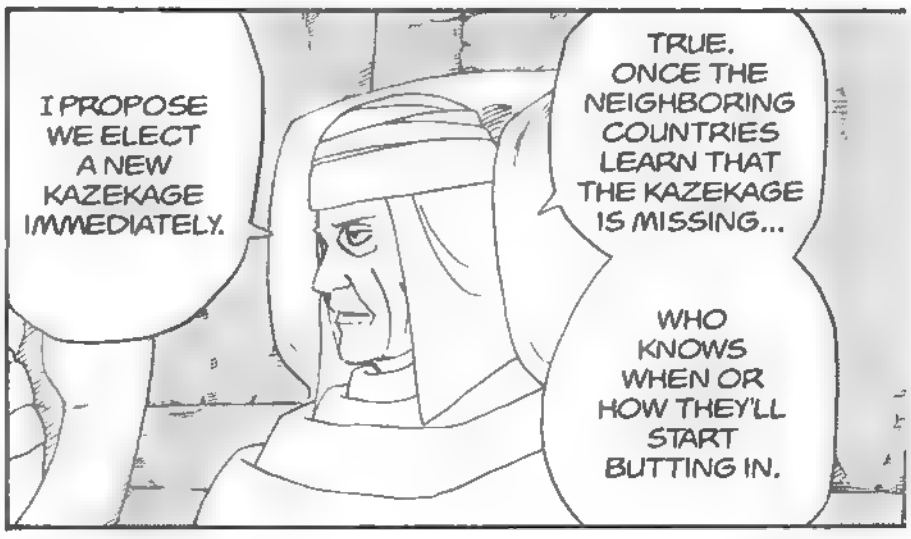
IT WAS YOU.
CHIFT
BUT OF COURSE.
REMEMBER WHO TAUGHT ME HOW TO PLAY WITH PUPPETS? WHO DRILLED THE TALENT INTO ME?



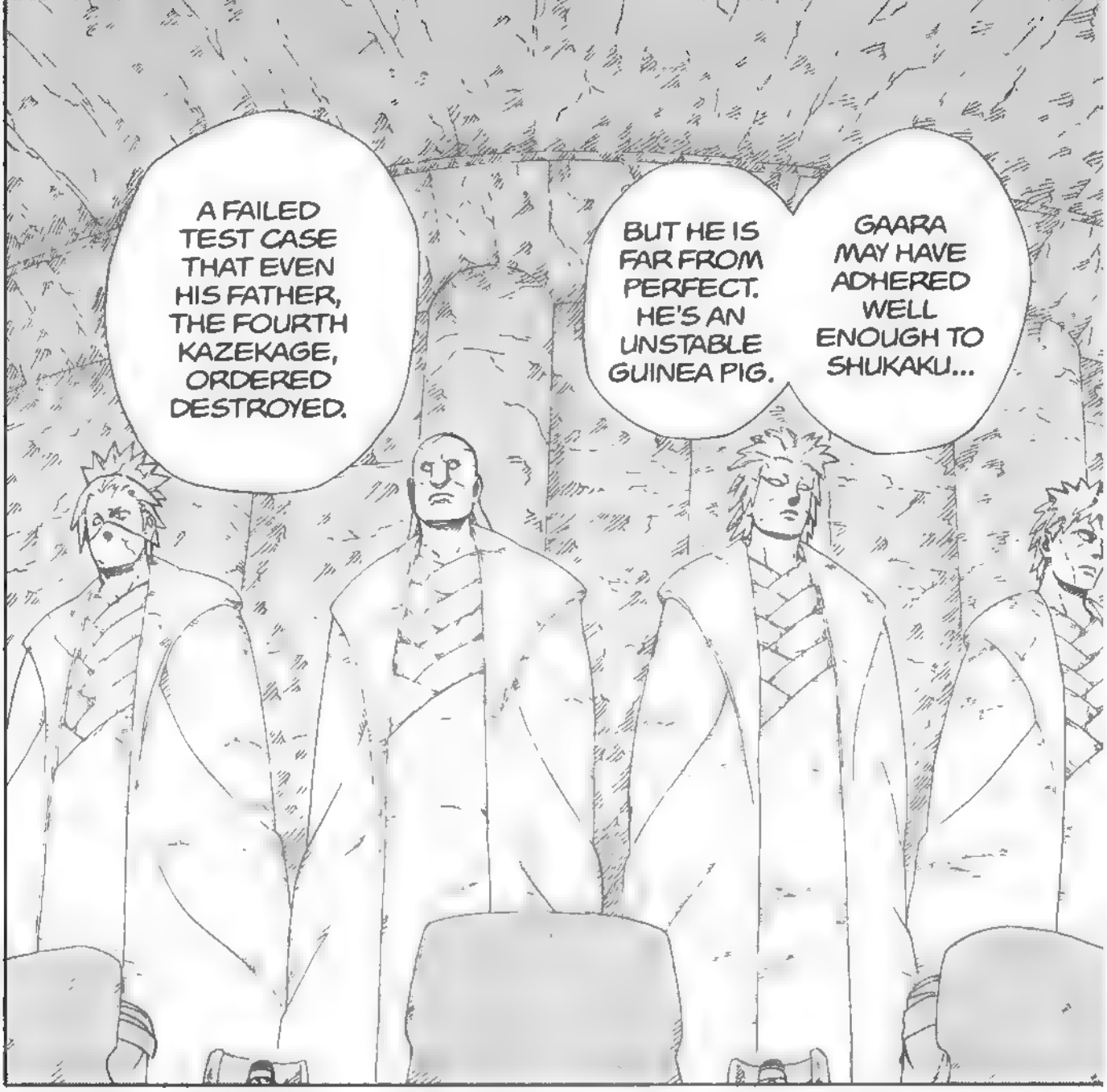
A DISGRACE OF THIS MAGNITUDE MUST NOT GET OUT. WERE THE OTHER NATIONS TO LEARN ...
I UNDERSTAND THAT SASORI OF THE RED SAND WAS INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT!


THE KAZEKAGE? A MEMBER OF ONE OF THE FIVE GREAT NATIONS, KIDNAPPED BY BANDITS?! A SCANDAL LIKE THIS COULD UNDERMINE OUR AUTHORITY OVER THE OTHER COUNTRIES!
WHENEVER WILL GAARA RETURN?

STABILIZING THE VILLAGE MUST BE OUR TOP PRIORITY.


I PROPOSE WE ELECT A NEW KAZEKAGE IMMEDIATELY.
TRUE. ONCE THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES LEARN THAT THE KAZEKAGE IS MISSING...
WHO KNOWS WHEN OR HOW THEY'LL START BUTTING IN.

...
WELL... THE FACT IS, IT WOULD...
...BE BETTER FOR THE VILLAGE WERE HE NEVER TO RETURN.
GAARA MAY YET RETURN! WE DON'T KNOW THAT HE'S GONE FOREVER.
WITH THE ONE-TAILED BEAST DWELLING INSIDE HIM, GAARA IS, IN EFFECT, AN UNSTABLE MONSTER.
WE HAD THOUGHT IF HE WERE KAZEKAGE, HE WOULD PERHAPS BE EASIER TO CONTROL.
!
THUK
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
HE'S A BURDEN UPON US. THERE'S NO DENYING IT.
BUT WHO KNOWS WHEN GAARA WILL CRACK AGAIN?

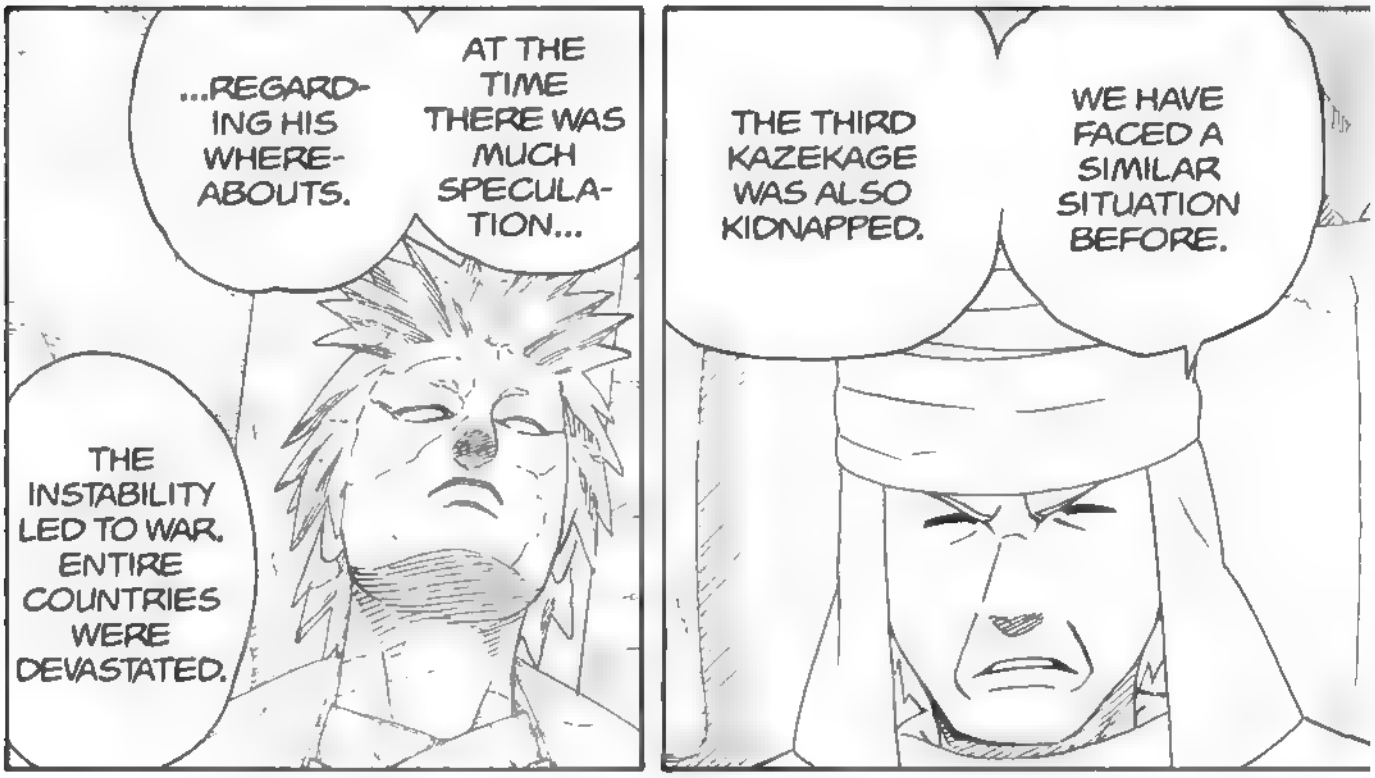

A FAILED TEST CASE THAT EVEN HIS FATHER, THE FOURTH KAZEKAGE, ORDERED DESTROYED.
BUT HE IS FAR FROM PERFECT. HE'S AN UNSTABLE GUINEA PIG.
GAARA MAY HAVE ADHERED WELL ENOUGH TO SHUKAKU...

AND WE EXPECT NO GREAT THINGS FROM HIM. THAT'S A FACT.
BUT TO MOST OF US HE IS SIMPLY A THREAT.
SHF

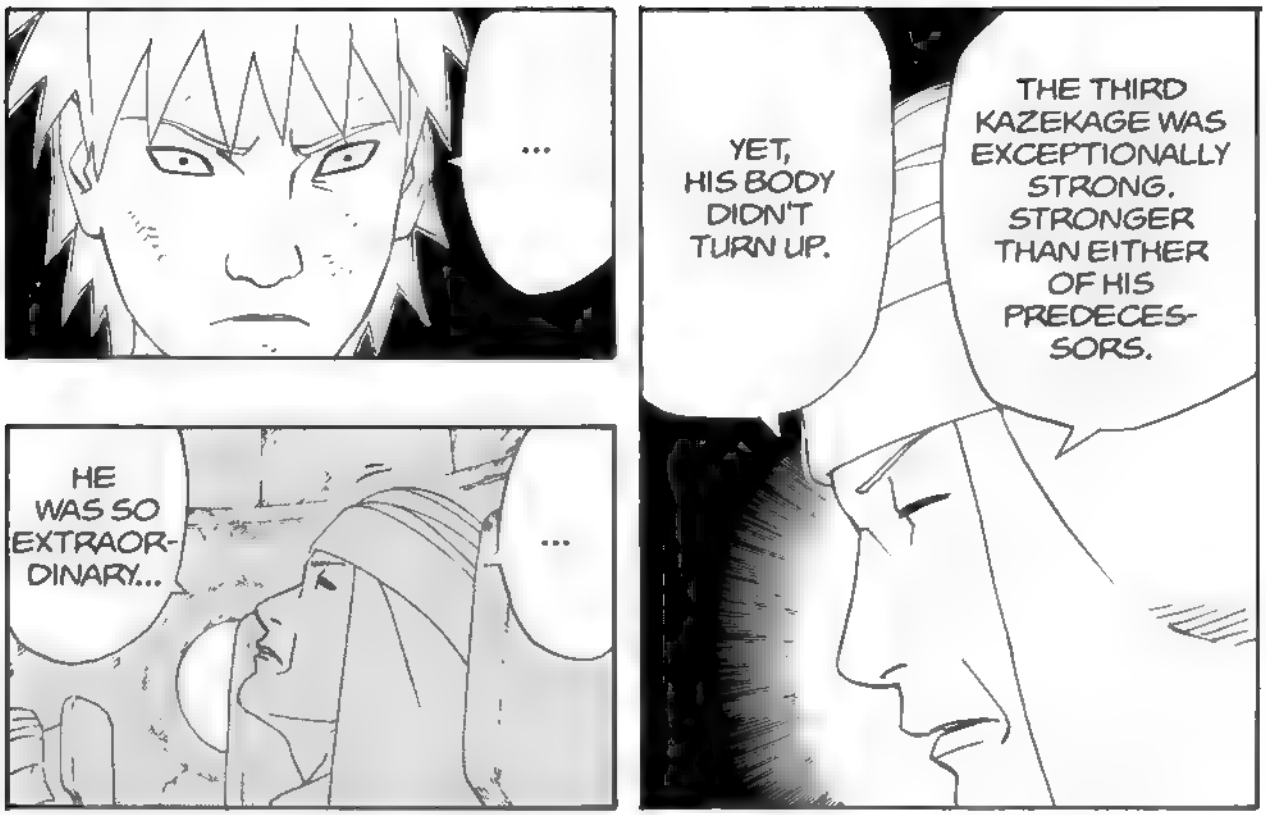
...SOME YOUTHS HOLD HIM IN SOME ESTEEM.
NOT KNOWING WHAT GAARA IS MADE OF...

CHURK
GACK!
!
DO YOU NOT SEE THE STATUES? WE ALL SIT IN THE SHADOW OF THE KAZEKAGE.
KANKURO, STOP THIS!
THIS IS A SACRED PLACE!!
SENIOR OFFICER OR NOT, I'M NOT GOING TO SIT AND LISTEN TO THIS.
YOU'D BETTER FIX THAT LEAKY SEWER PIPE OF A MOUTH.
...

RRG.
KAFF KAFF
KANKURO... I UNDERSTAND YOUR INDIGNATION, BUT HE HAS A POINT.
IT'S JUST THAT... THE ISSUE ISN'T WHETHER OR NOT WE CAN TRUST GAARA.


...REGARDING HIS WHEREABOUTS.
AT THE TIME THERE WAS MUCH SPECULATION...
THE INSTABILITY LED TO WAR. ENTIRE COUNTRIES WERE DEVASTATED.
THE THIRD KAZEKAGE WAS ALSO KIDNAPPED.
WE HAVE FACED A SIMILAR SITUATION BEFORE.

SO WHY DIDN'T YOU?
...
THP
THP
IF WE HAD FOCUSED ON STABILITY AT HOME RATHER THAN SEARCHING FOR HIM, WE WOULD NOT HAVE COME TO SUCH DISASTER.


...
THE THIRD KAZEKAGE WAS EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG. STRONGER THAN EITHER OF HIS PREDECES-SORS.
YET, HIS BODY DIDN'T TURN UP.
HE WAS SO EXTRAOR-DINARY...
...

IN ANY CASE... RIGHT NOW, OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY MUST BE THE VILLAGE.
THAT SUCH A STRONG MAN COULD BE KILLED SO EASILY...
...NO ONE BELIEVED IT POSSIBLE.

SWOOP
SHF

CH OK
FSH
KA
SCEEAAGH!!
BLAM
TINK
SPIT

PLIK
PLIK
YOU'RE NOT TAKING GAARA!!
TAK

AND THIS GAARA IS NO LESS STRANGE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN A HOST SO BELOVED AS HE.

A JINCHÛRIKI HOST IS SUPPOSED TO BE SULLEN AND MISANTHROPIC... HMMM?
YOU ARE QUITE THE ODDBALL.

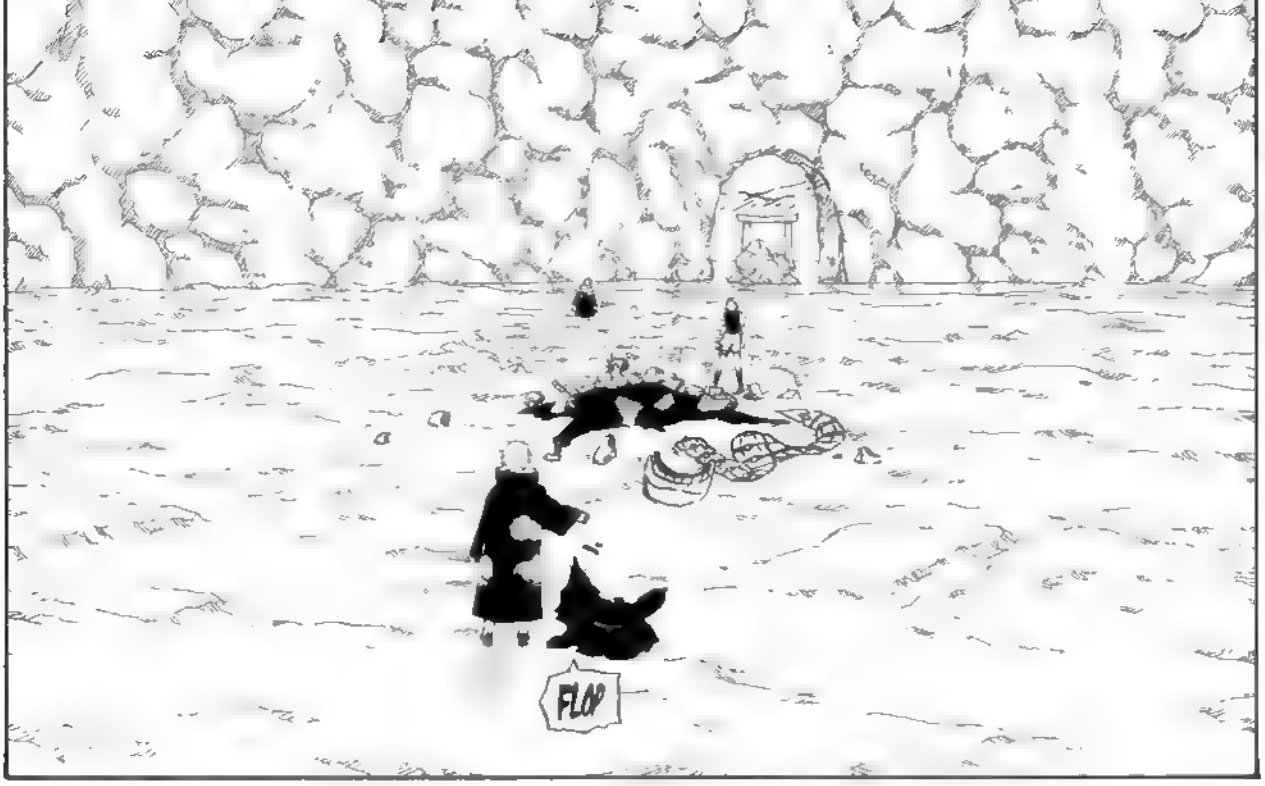
BUT NO ONE EVER TRIED TO SAVE THEM.
NOT THEIR FRIENDS, NOT THEIR NEIGHBORS. NOT A SOUL. HMMM?
TO DATE WE'VE DESTROYED TWO JINCHÛRIKI HOSTS...
NOT INCLUDING HIM, OF COURSE.

READ THIS WAY
...
FWOOP
IN FACT, TO SOME THEIR DEATHS CAME AS A RELIEF.
HEH HEH HEH...
THE POINT IS, YOU ARE DOOMED...
WELL, ANYWAY. WHEN I REMOVED HIS ONE-TAILED BEAST, IT WAS THE END OF GAARA.
...ALL THE SAME.
YOU FEEL TOO CONNECTED TO THIS PATHETIC CREATURE? HMMM?
PERHAPS YOU CAN'T IGNORE ONE OF YOUR OWN KIND?
YOU FILTH...
YOU'RE ALL DEAD.
...

GRANNY CHIYO?
SO... YOU STILL THINK THIS'LL BE EASY?

?!!

?!


FLOP

ALL THESE YEARS... AND NOT A DAY ON HIM.
WHAT IS HAPPEN-ING?
...
SA-SORI?
GRANNY CHIYO? THIS IS...

YOU KNOW, THIS ONE WAS HARD TO FINISH.
LET ME SHOW YOU MY FAVORITE.
FLIP
SHF

BO
OF
BUT THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME SO FOND OF HIM.

NO...
THAT'S NOT...

!!

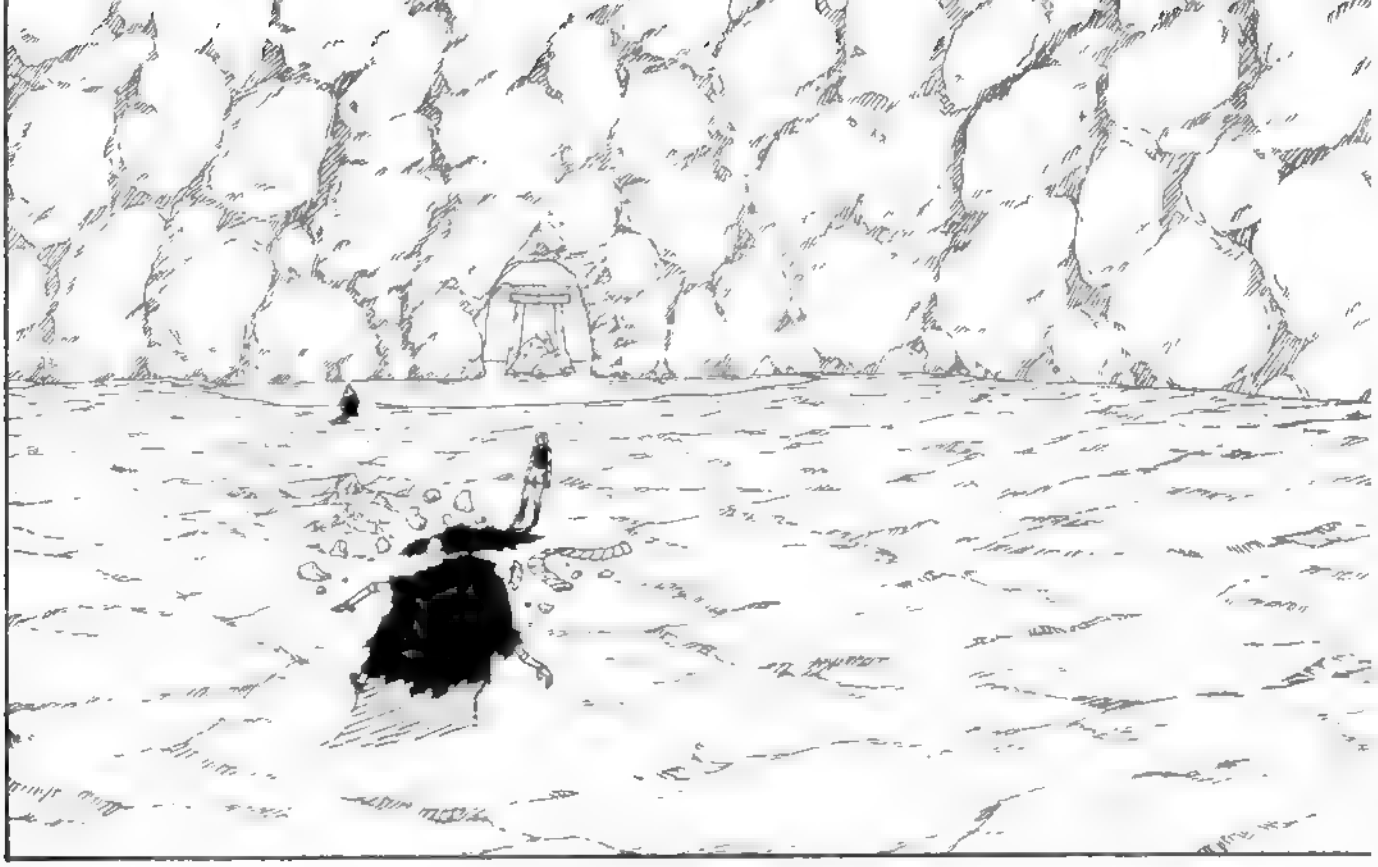
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?!
...?!

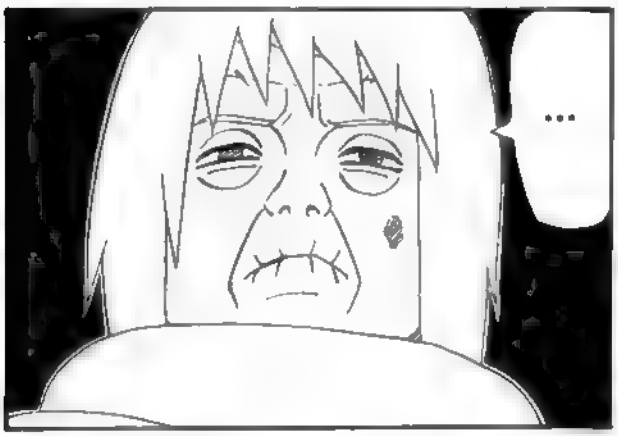
...THE THIRD KAZE-KAGE...
THAT'S ...

SWOO
HEH..
SHALL WE BEGIN?

NARUTO

Number 267:
Fierce Determination...!!




...

YOU MEAN ...
THE THIRD KAZE-KAGE ...?

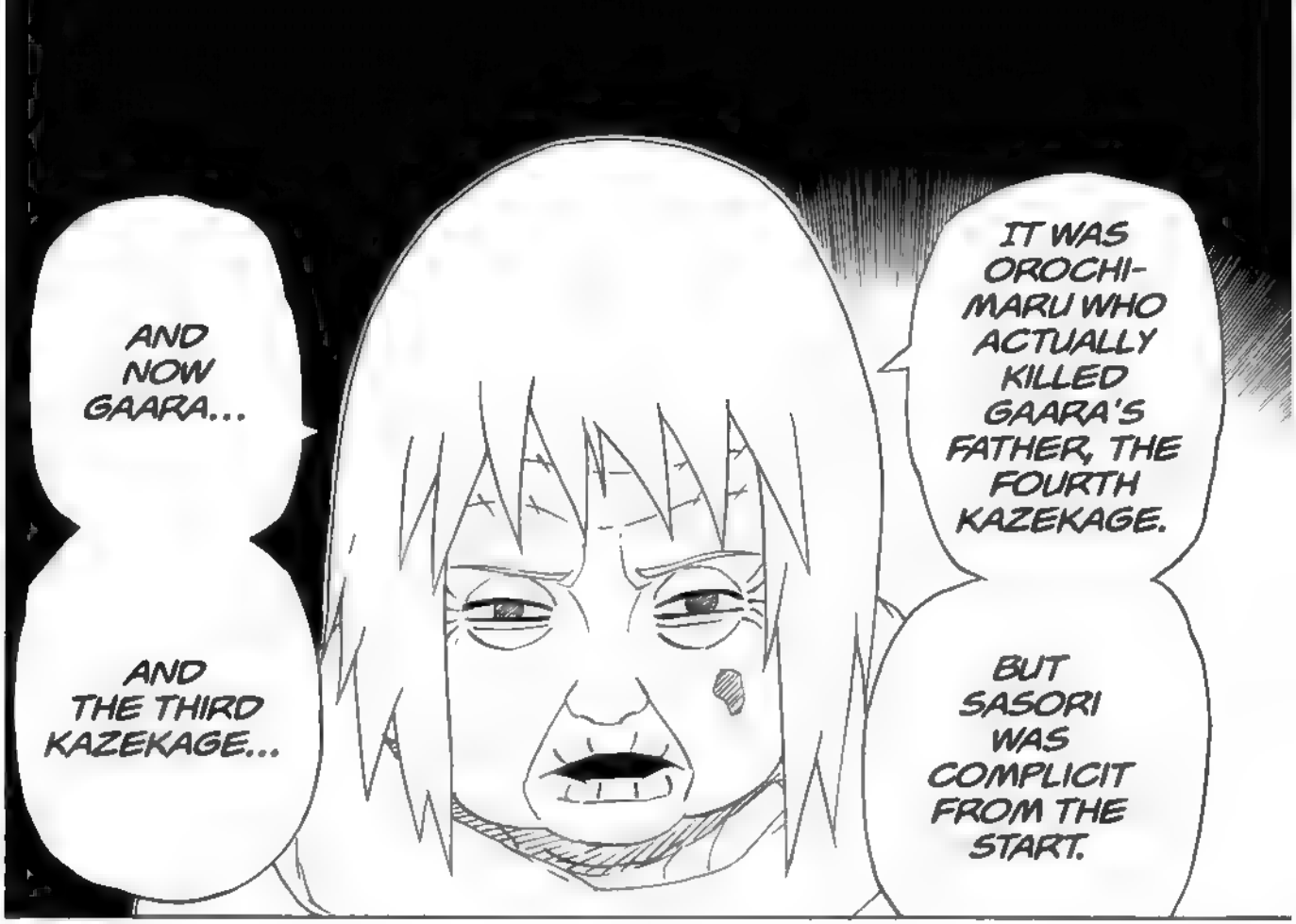
!

IT WAS MORE THAN TEN YEARS AGO... THE THIRD KAZEKAGE VANISHED SUDDENLY.

HMPH... A RETIRED WITCH, ALREADY ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE...
YET STILL YOU TROUBLE YOURSELF.
SASORI... SO IT WAS YOU!

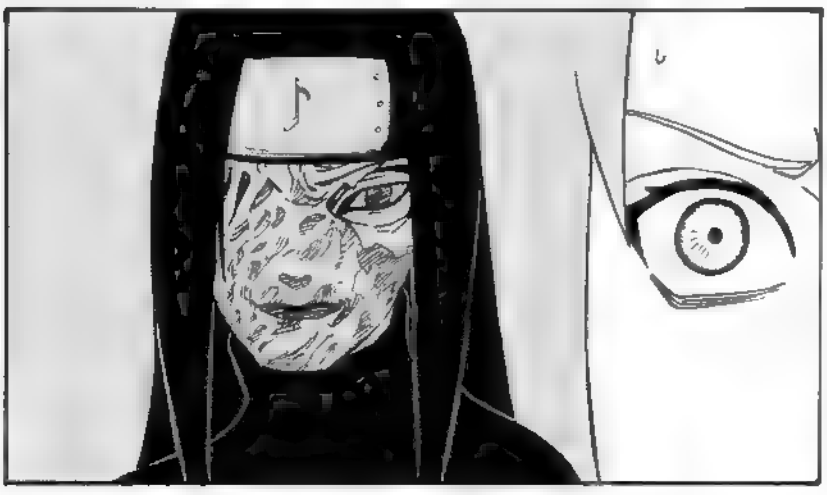
...
THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY THINGS LEFT UNDONE.
RETIRED, YES. ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE, MAYBE. BUT THAT DOESN'T PREVENT MY GETTING AROUND.

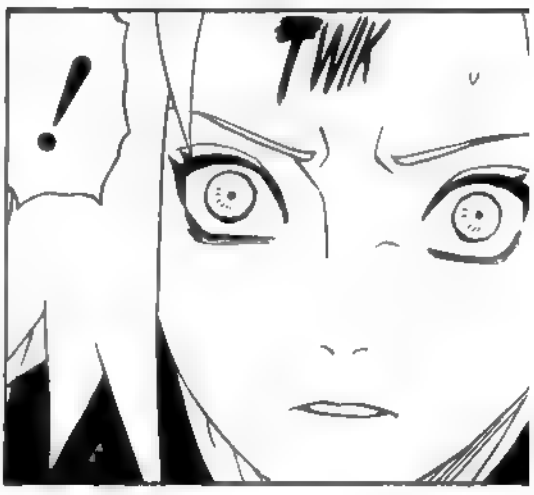
THREE OF THEM?
BUT BETRAYING THE VILLAGE?
PARTICIPATING IN THE DEATHS OF THREE KAZEKAGE?!
MY GRANDSON, DEGRADING HIMSELF... BECOMING A CRIMINAL... WELL, THAT'S ONE THING.


AND NOW GAARA...
AND THE THIRD KAZEKAGE...
IT WAS OROCHI-MARU WHO ACTUALLY KILLED GAARA'S FATHER, THE FOURTH KAZEKAGE.
BUT SASORI WAS COMPLICIT FROM THE START.

BUT YEAH, OROCHI-MARU AND THE AKATSUKI GO WAY BACK...
WE'VE DONE SOME WORK TOGETHER.

I WASN'T INVOLVED WITH THE FOURTH.
THAT WAS ONE OF MY AGENTS.




TWIK
!

...!

YOU...

HM. IT'S TIME TO FINISH HERE.

YOU WORKED WITH... OROCHI-MARU.
GRRRR

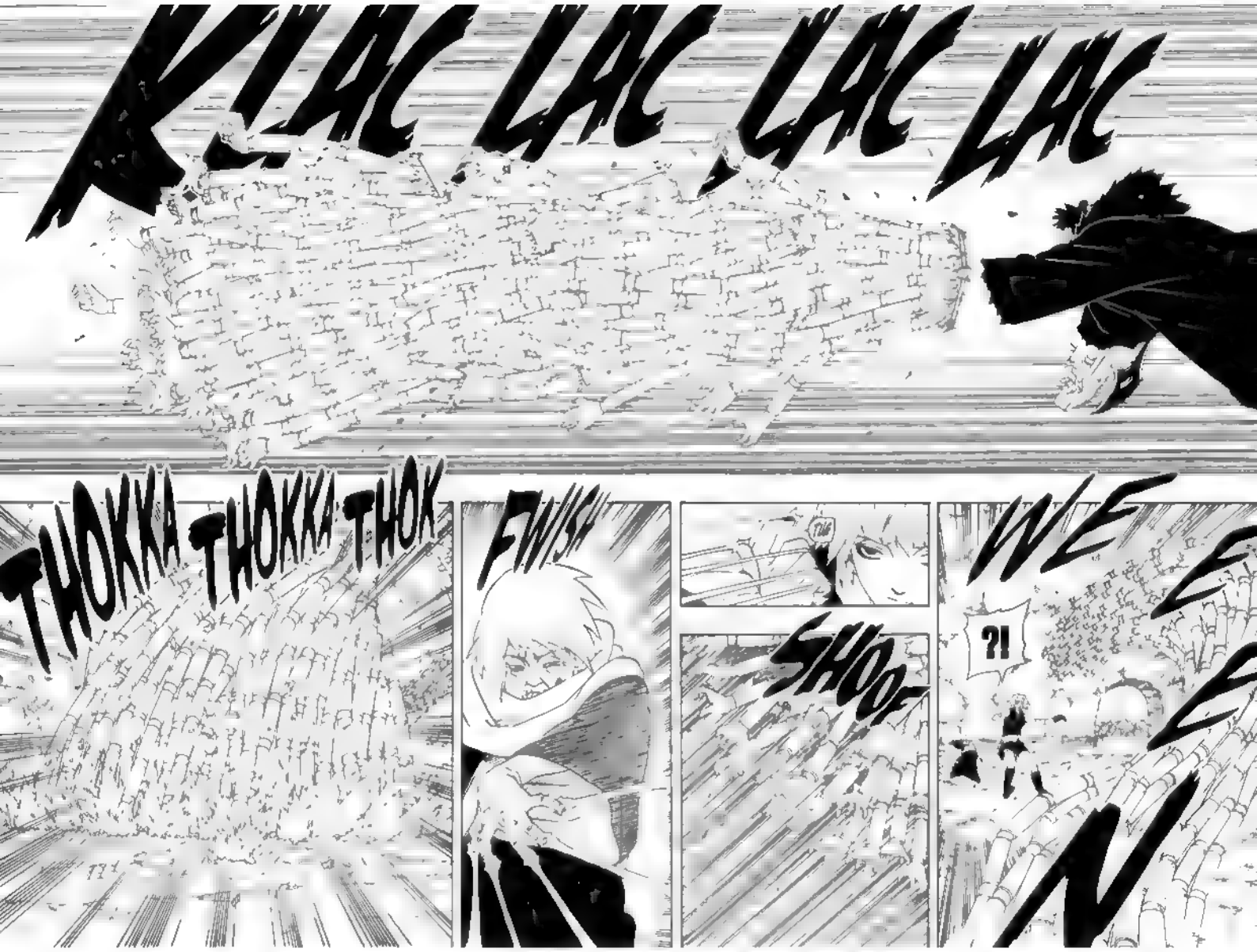
SHA
SH
YANK
!
!
TUG

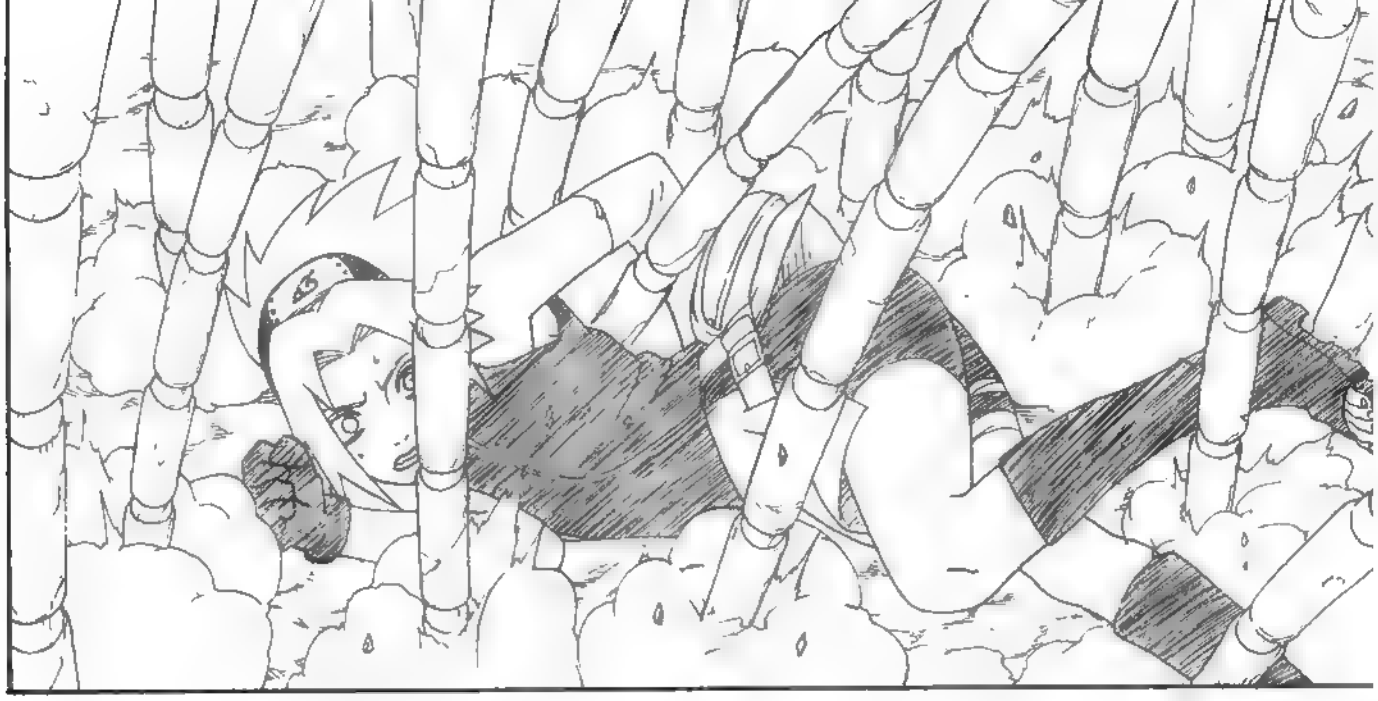
ACK!!

SFX
HE'S FAST!
FWISH
!!
SPISH
KIK
AH

PRETTY GOOD, GRANNY CHIYO.
SO MUCH FOR HIRUKO'S TAIL...

SPOV
SPOV
YANK
CHAKKA
ZWOOF
CHAKKA
HERE GOES!!


KLAC LAC, LAC LAC
THOKKA THOKKA THOK
FWISH
SHOOF
WEEE
?!

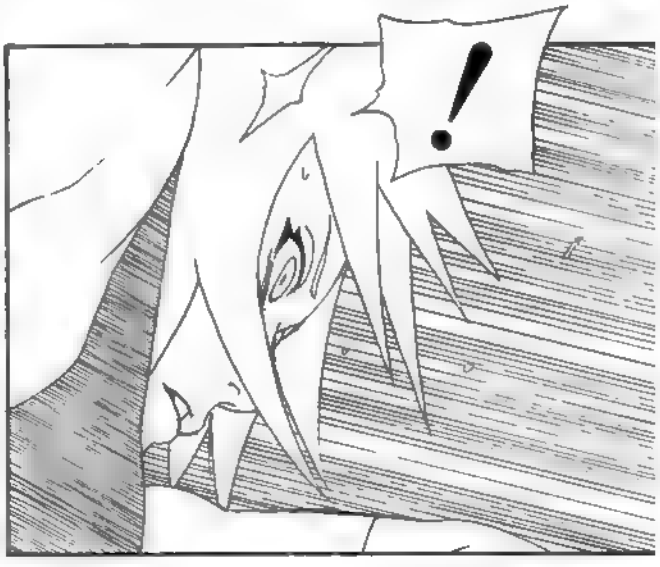


SKRNCH

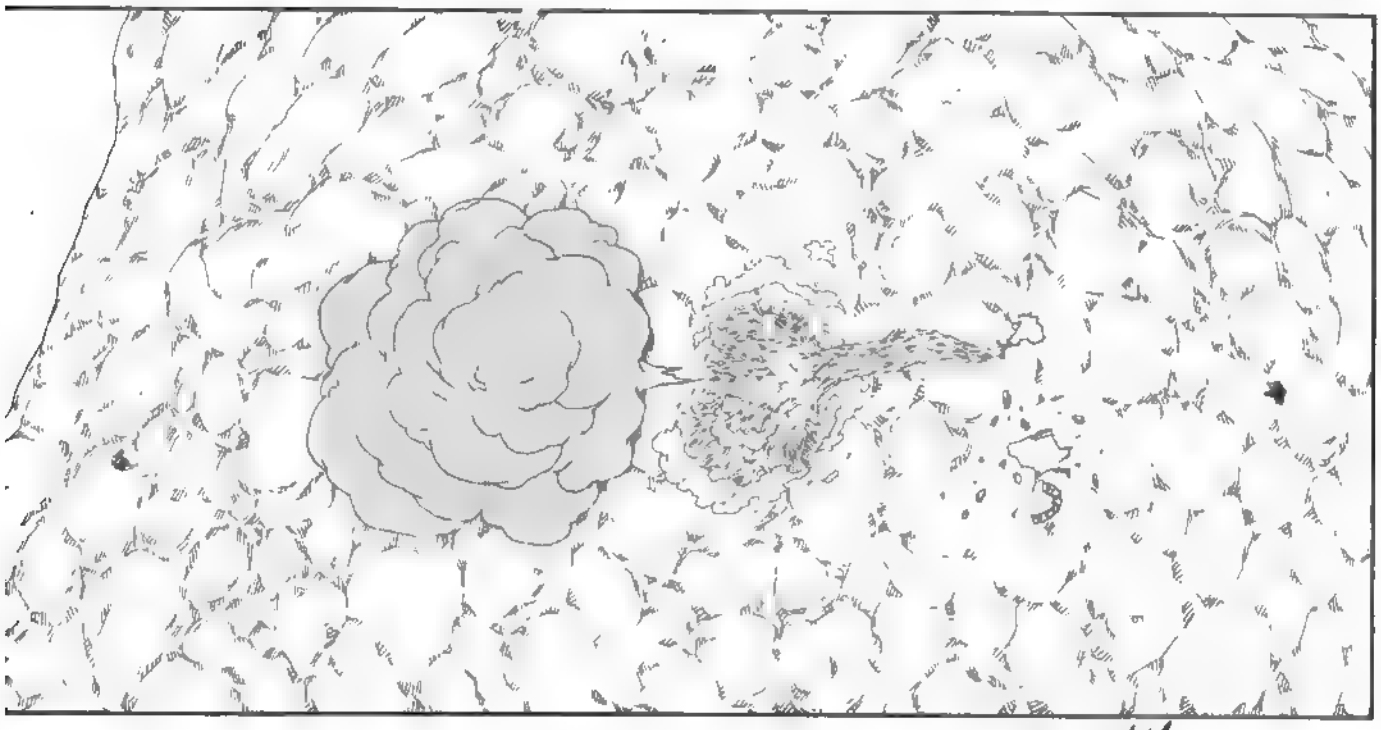
TUG

TUG
AH, THIS IS USELESS SO LONG AS SHE'S UNDER THAT BAT'S CONTROL...
OKAY THEN.

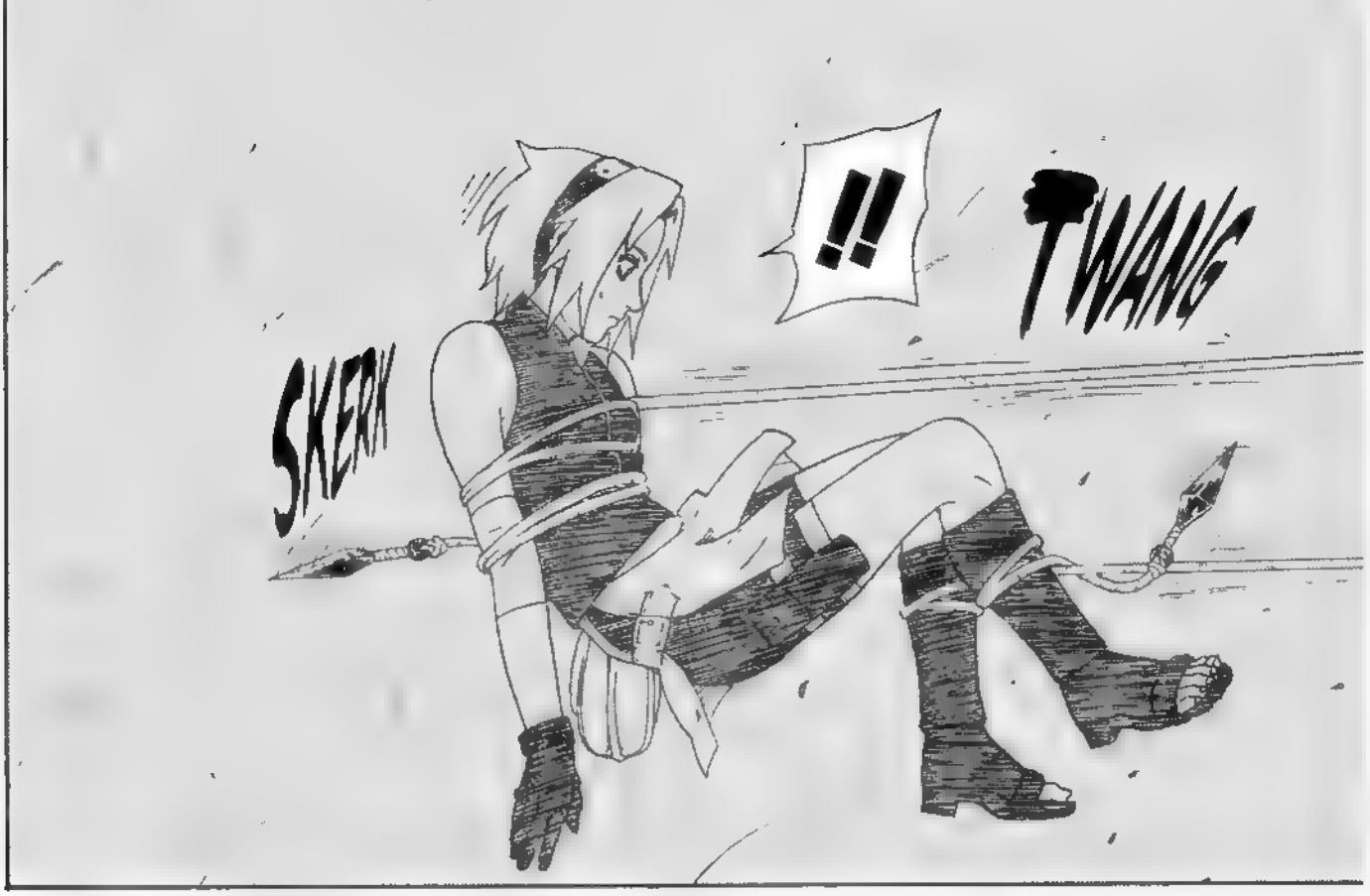
PSHHHH

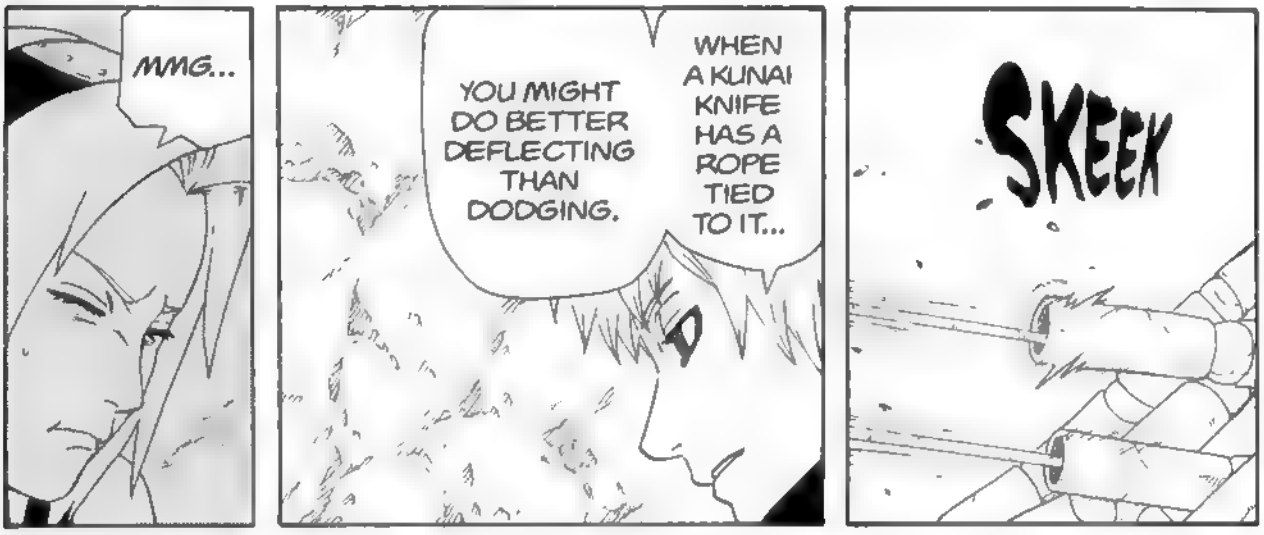

!

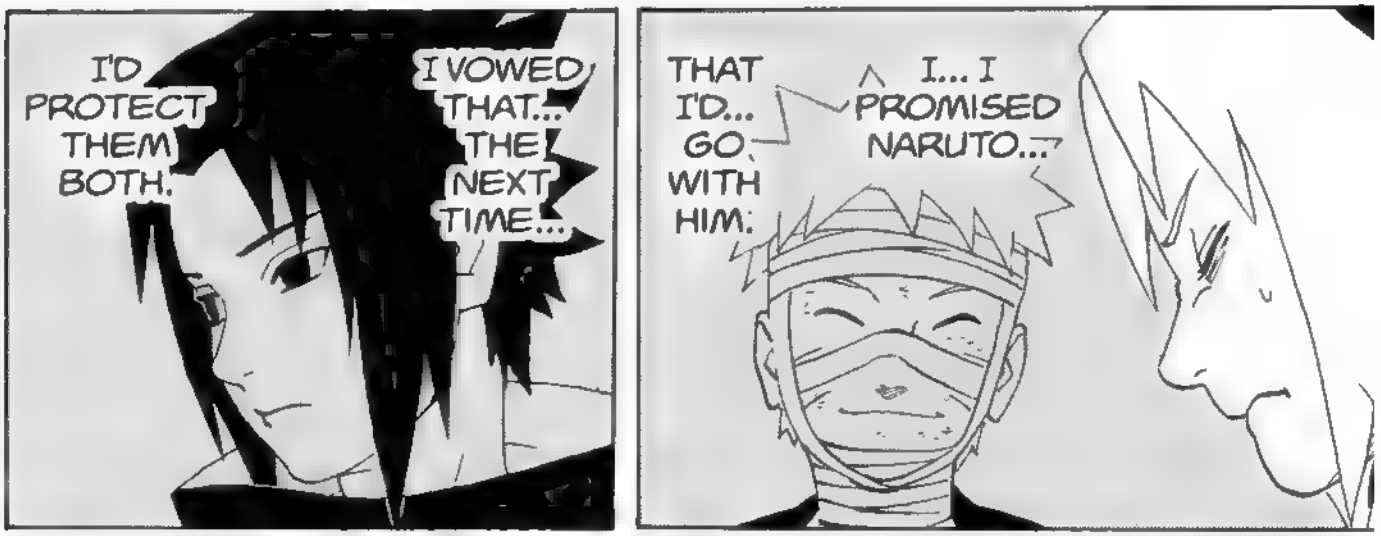
POISON ?!
MWUR
ACK!
MWUR
SAKURA!
NO!
HOLD YOUR BREATH!



NOW, POISON GAS... THAT TELLS A DIFFERENT STORY.
?!
GUK
YANK


!!
TWANG
SKERK

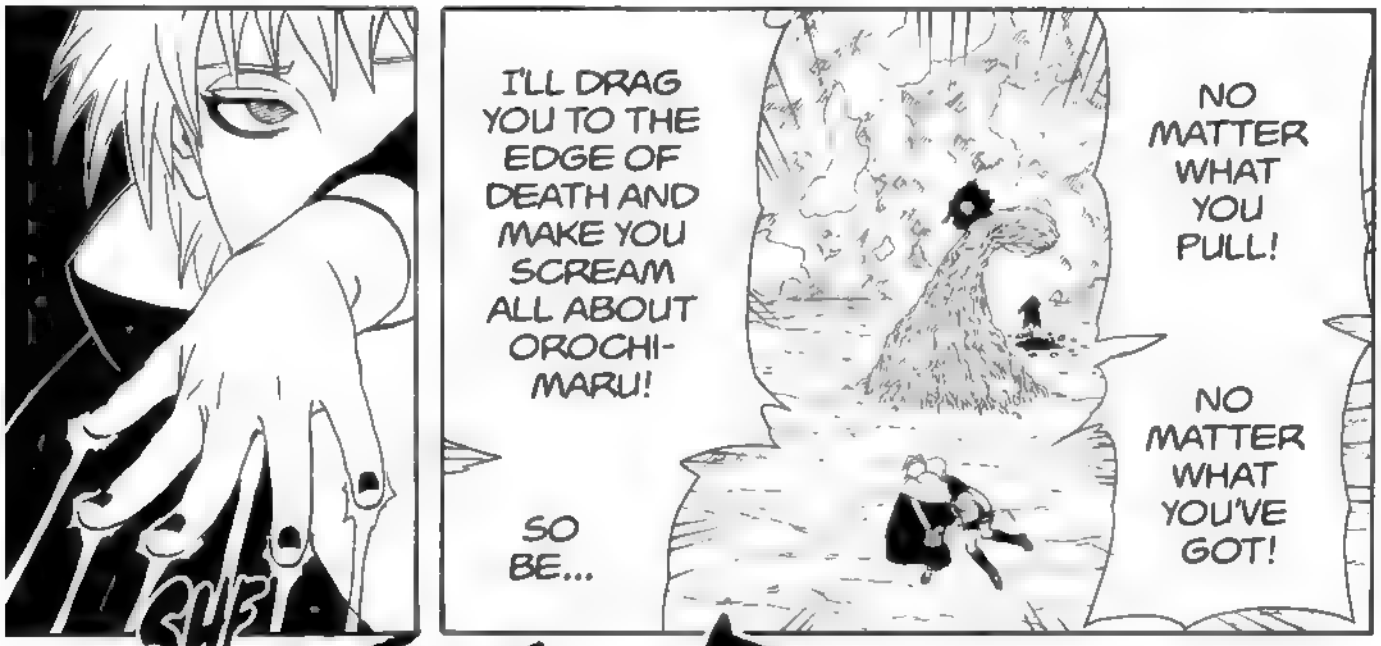

MMG...
YOU MIGHT DO BETTER DEFLECTING THAN DODGING.
WHEN A KUNAI KNIFE HAS A ROPE TIED TO IT...
SKEEK


I'D PROTECT THEM BOTH.
I VOWED THAT... THE NEXT TIME...
THAT I'D... GO WITH HIM.
I... I PROMISED NARUTO...

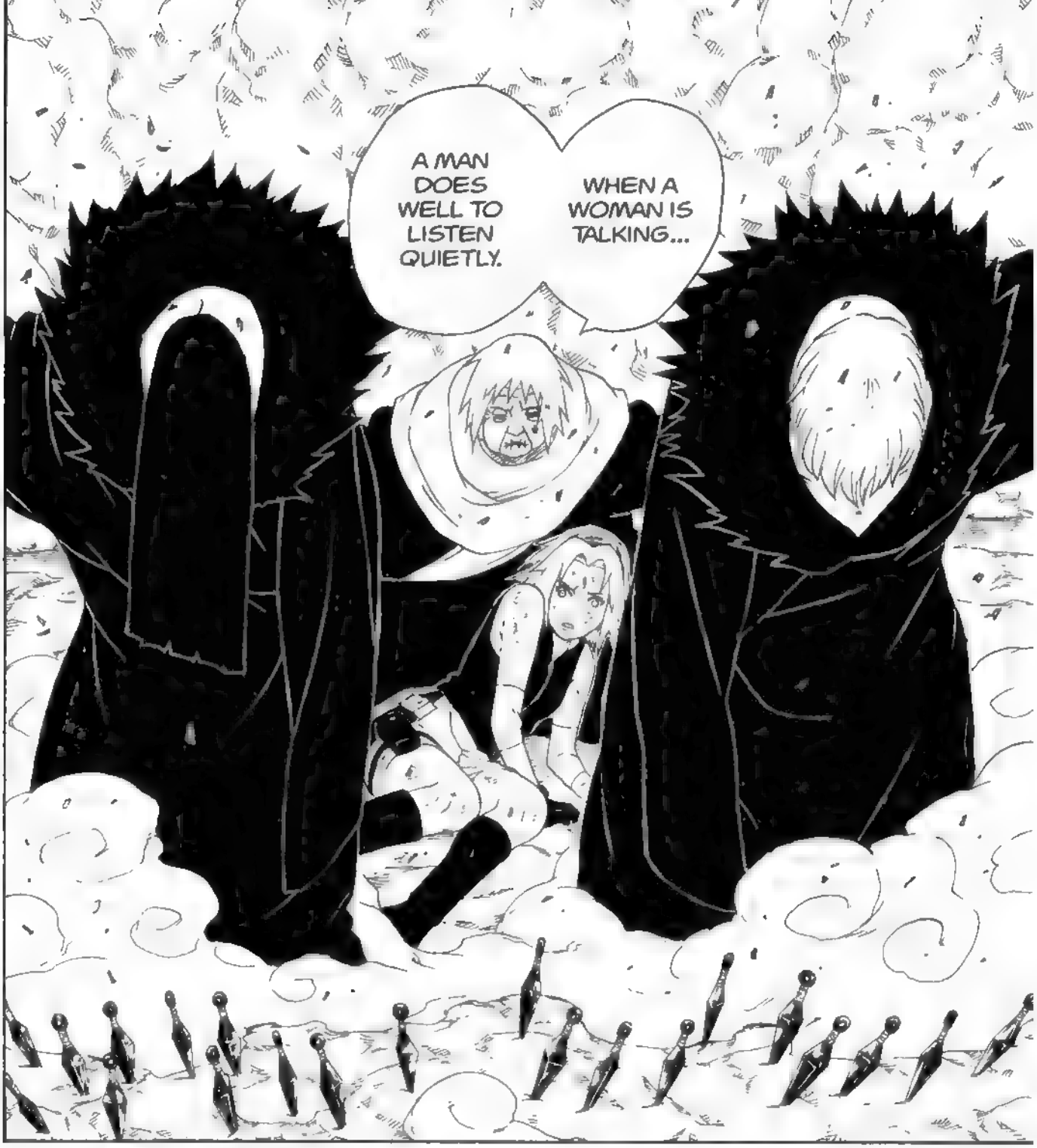
READ THIS WAY
I'M... NOT DONE FOR. NOT YET!!
FWT FWT
WOOSH
SAKURA! HANG IN THERE!!
SLF
KA-BOOM
!

PAT
KAFF!
KAFF!
SKISH
FUMP
HOW RECK-LESS...
SHE NEARLY BLEW HERSELF UP, ALONG WITH THE TRAP...
OH, THIS GIRL. USING A LETTER BOMB TO DISSIPATE THE GAS ...
KAF
YOU...
HUF
HUF
HUF
OH WELL.

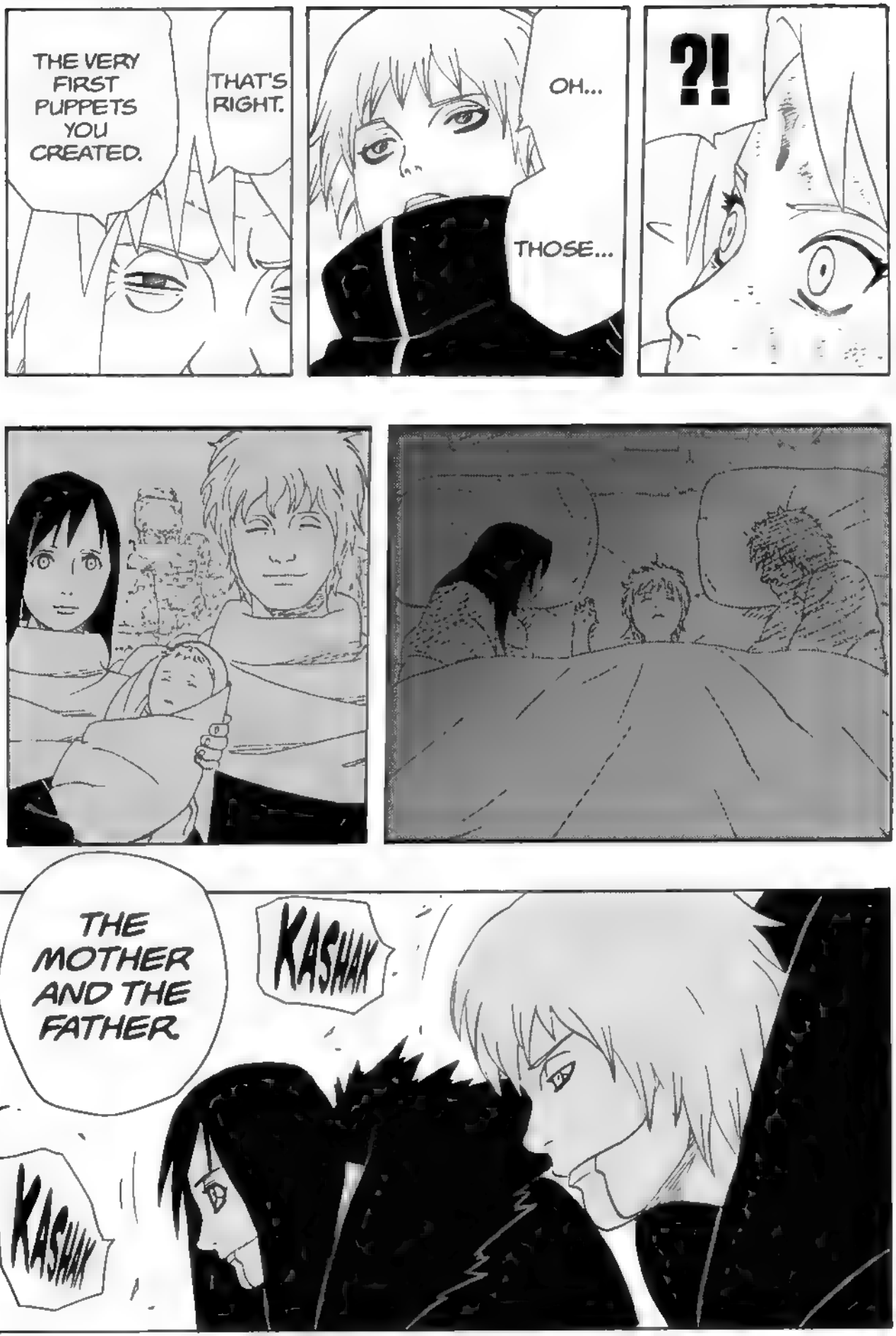
YOU CAN BLOW MY LIMBS OFF! YOU CAN POISON ME UNTIL I CAN'T MOVE, AND I'LL STILL GET YOU!!
I WILL GET YOU!!


SHF
I'LL DRAG YOU TO THE EDGE OF DEATH AND MAKE YOU SCREAM ALL ABOUT OROCHI-MARU!
SO BE...
NO MATTER WHAT YOU PULL!
NO MATTER WHAT YOU'VE GOT!

TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK
FWSSH WSH WSH WSH

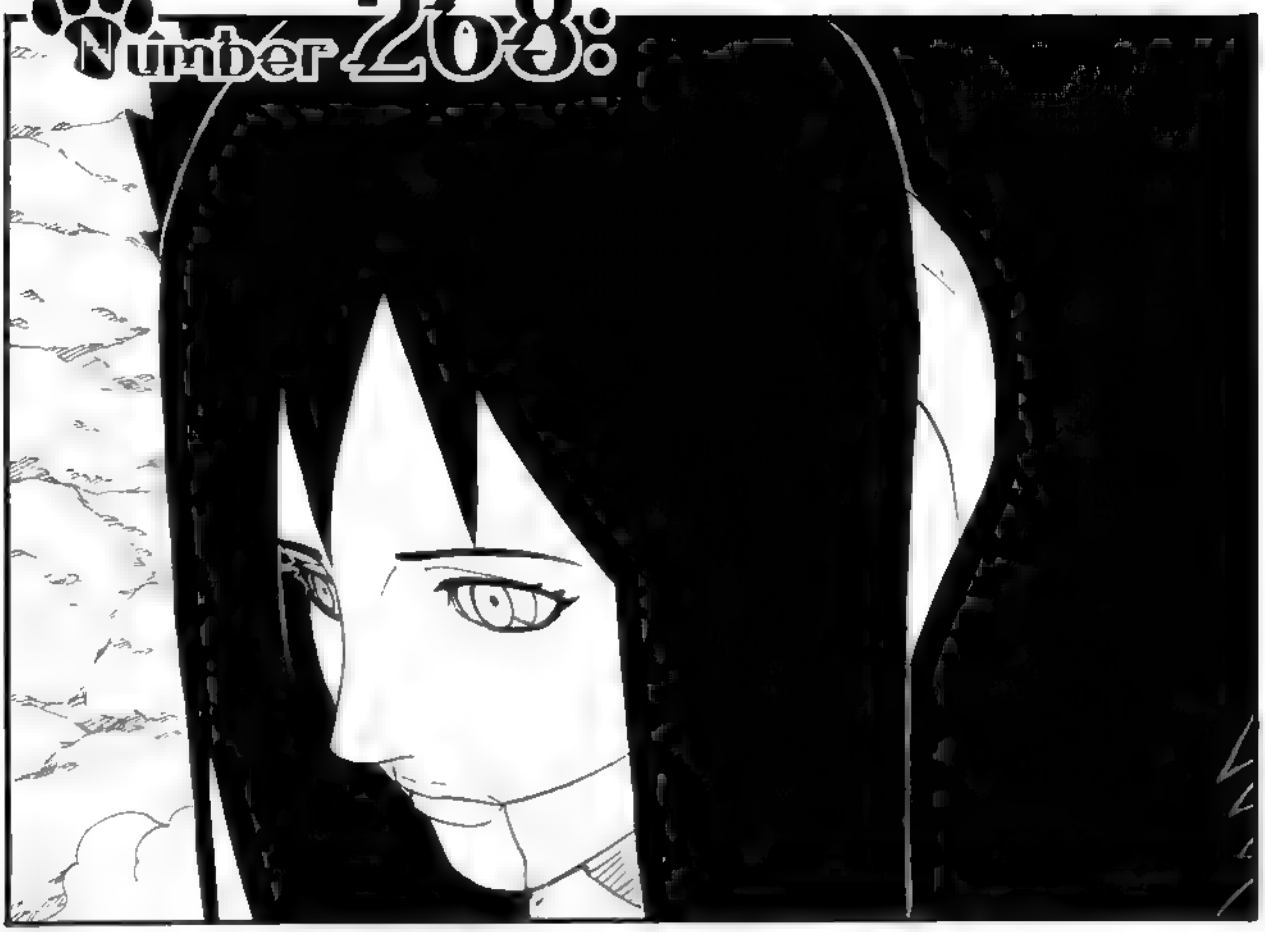

A MAN DOES WELL TO LISTEN QUIETLY.
WHEN A WOMAN IS TALKING...

SSSs


THE VERY FIRST PUPPETS YOU CREATED.
THAT'S RIGHT.
OH...
THOSE...
?!
THE MOTHER AND THE FATHER
KASHAK
KASHAK

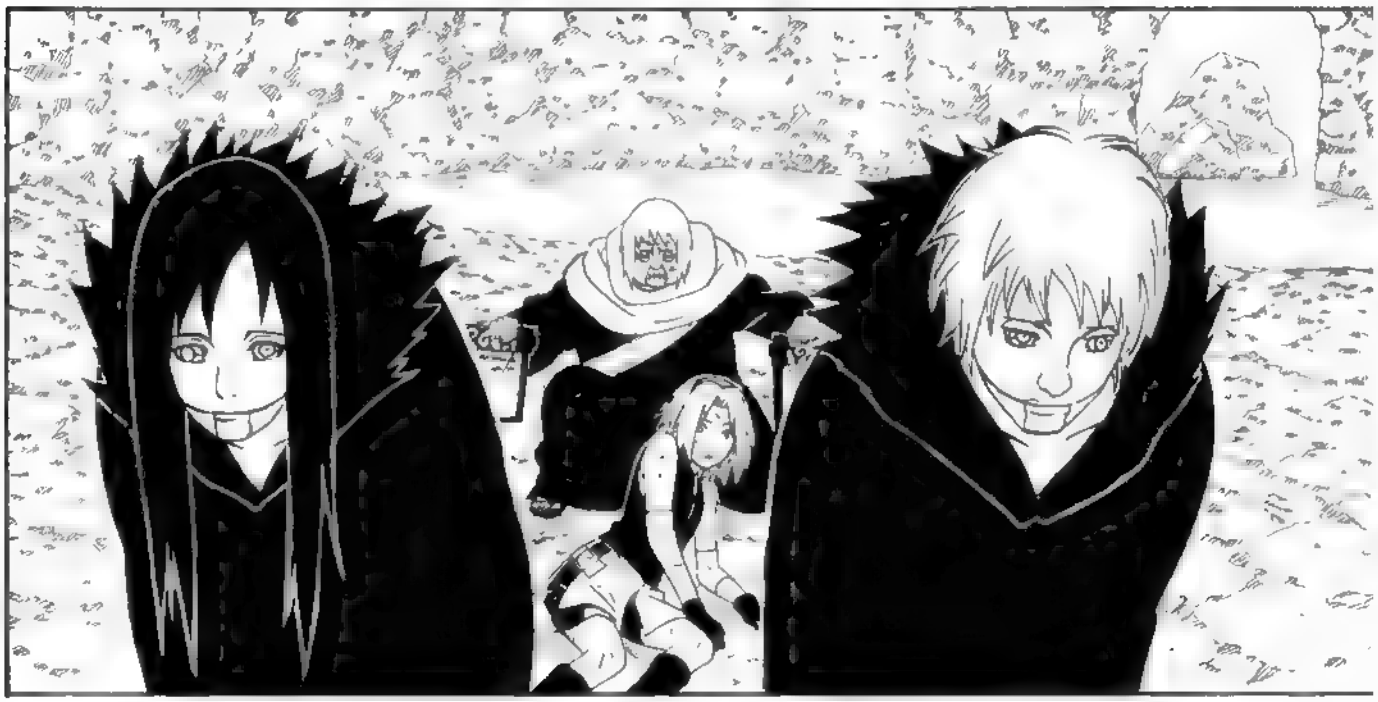
NARUTO

Number 268:



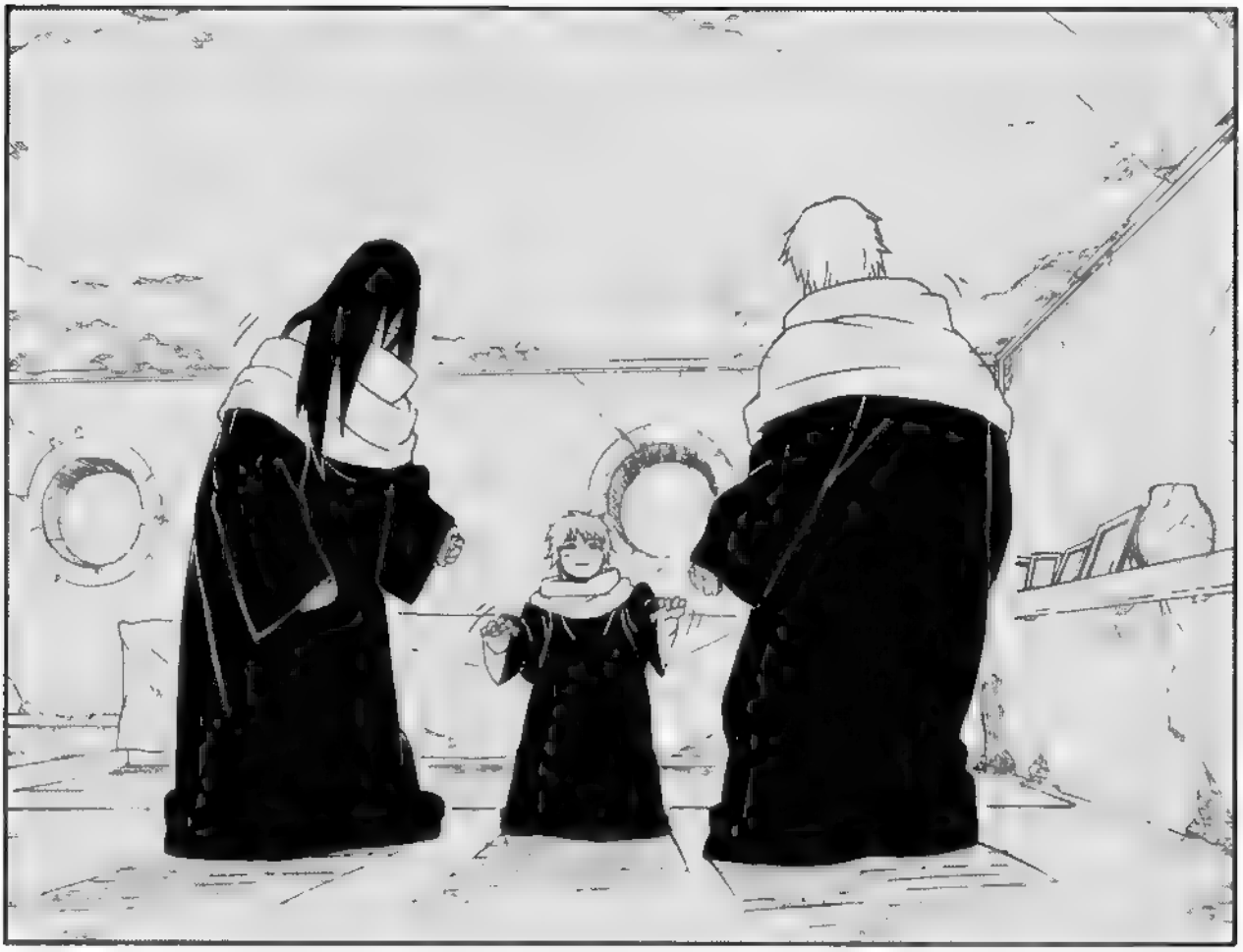
Puppet Masters!!

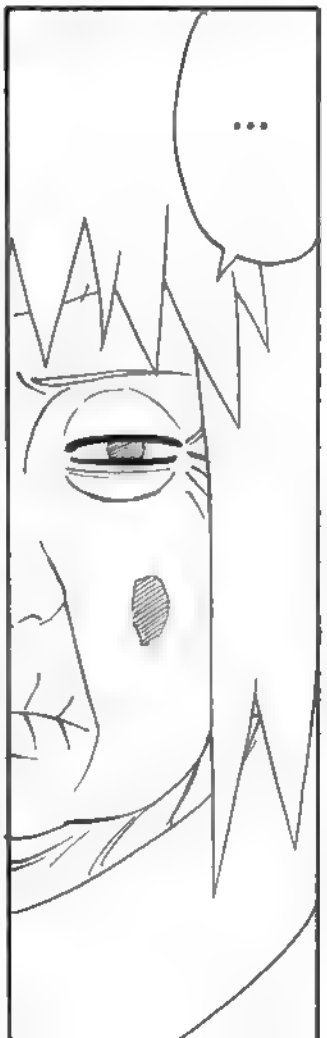
I KNOW THEIR WORKINGS INSIDE OUT.
I MADE THEM.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO DO WITH THEM NOW?



...
...

READ THIS WAY

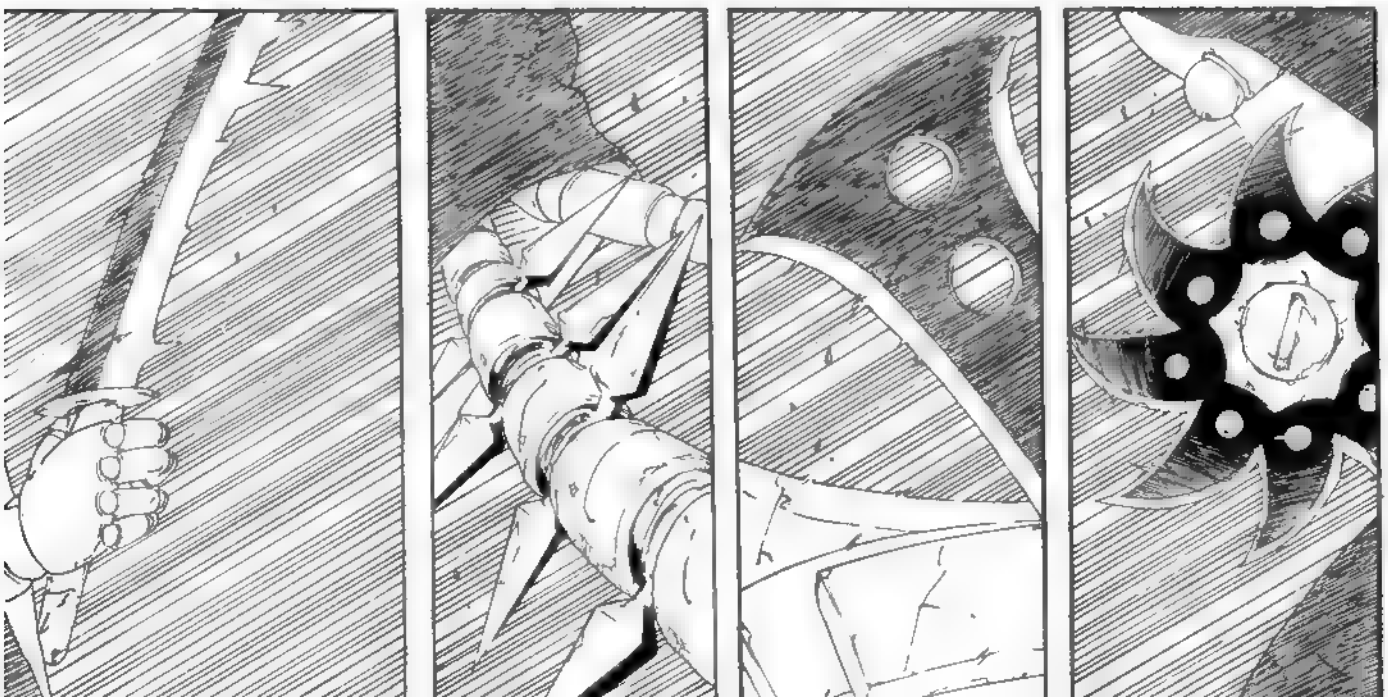




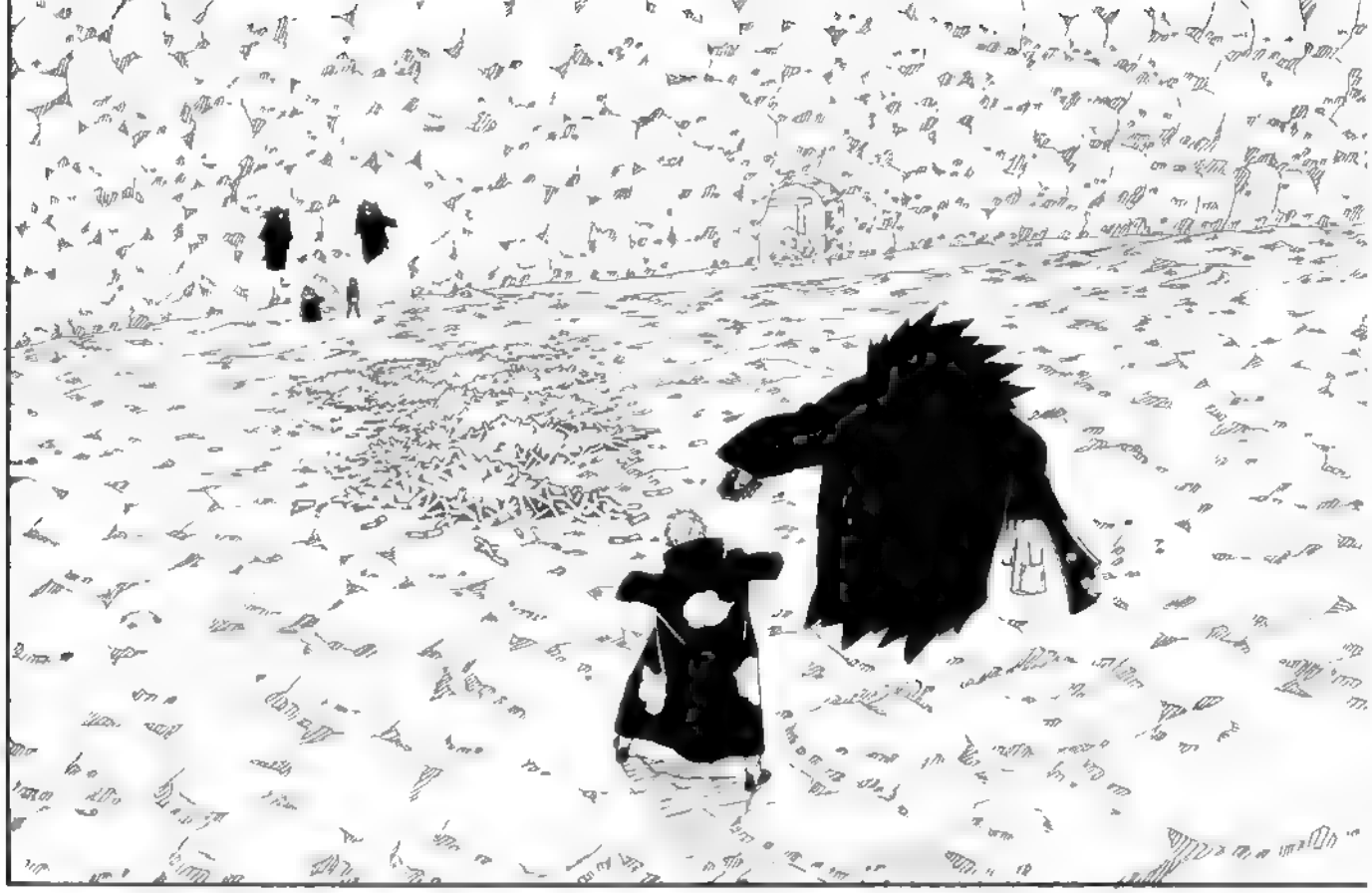
TUP
SHOOOOO
SKREE
FWISSH
WIRES
?
...

SKUSH SKUSH SKUSH
FSSH
FSSH

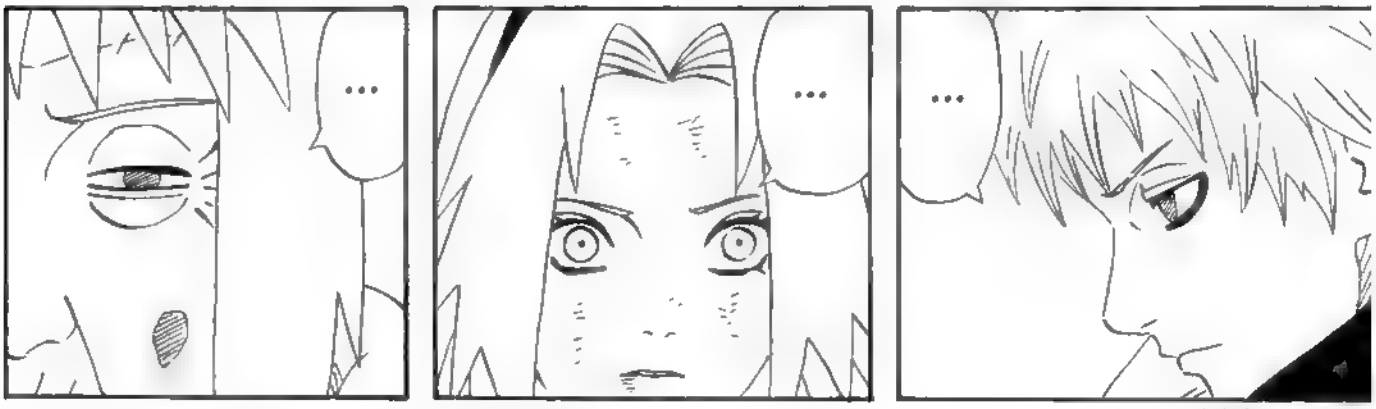
KRAK
SNAP



FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
THIS IS... INCREDI-BLE...
PLIK
PLIK
THK
THK
SHAI
NNG



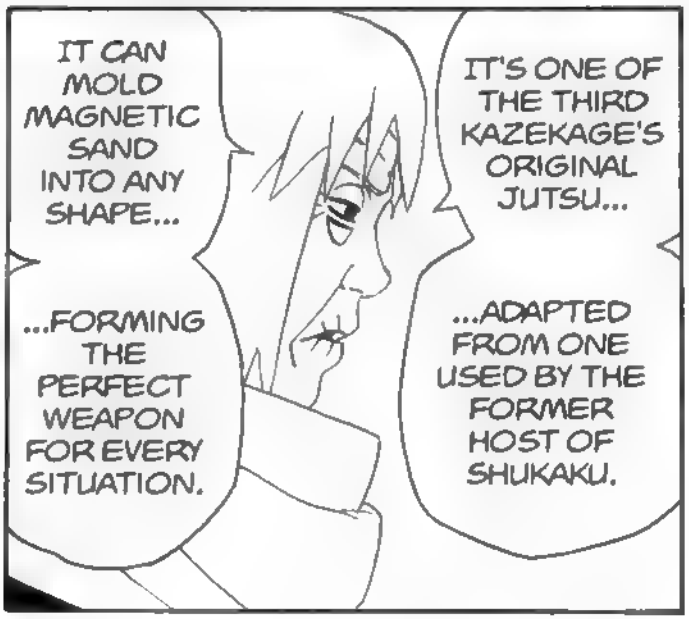
BETTER SPEED THINGS ALONG.
THIS IS BECOMING A NUISANCE ...

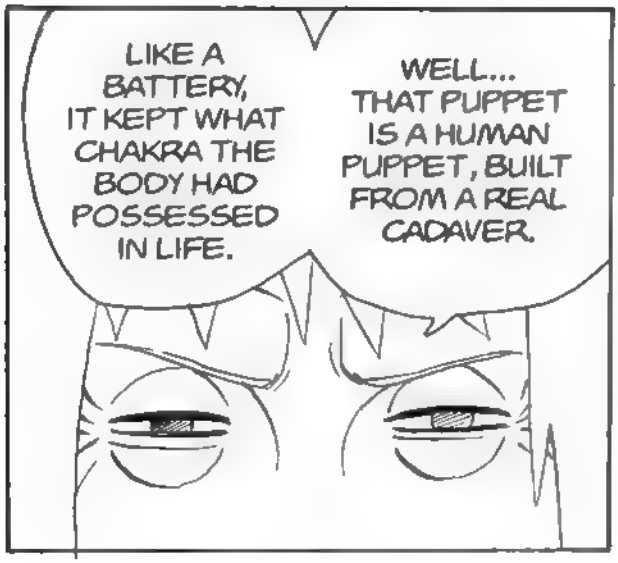

...
...
...

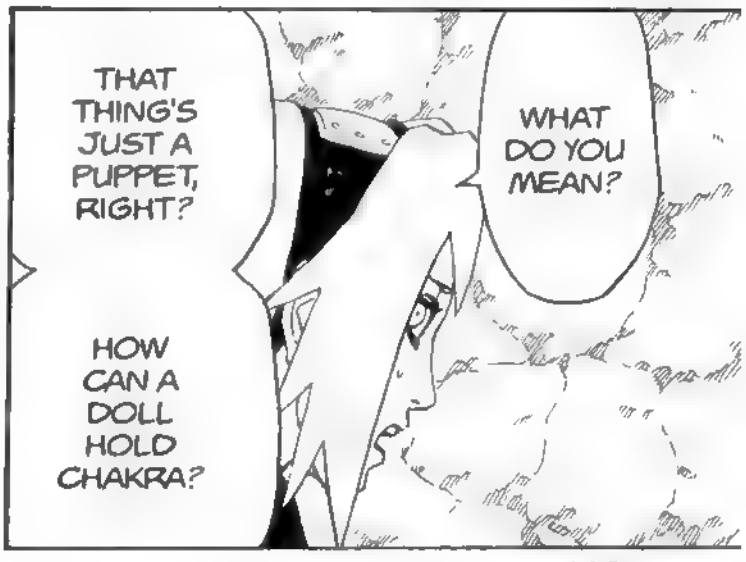
ZWUR ZWUR ZWUR
ZWUR ZWUR
HAVEN'T SEEN IT FOR A WHILE, HAVE YOU?
IF YOU RECALL, THIS IS WHAT MADE HIS NAME AS THE MOST POWERFUL OF ALL.
AS I FIGURED, THAT PUPPET...
...CAN USE THE THIRD KAZEKAGE'S OWN JUTSU.
WHAT ON EARTH?
IT'S THE MOST FEARED WEAPON IN SUNAGA-KURE.
THINGS ARE GOING TO GET MESSY.

SATETSU, THE IRON SAND.

THE THIRD KAZE-KAGE...
...WAS GRACED WITH A SPECIAL PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION THAT ALLOWED HIM TO CONVERT HIS CHAKRA INTO MAGNETIC FORCES.


IT'S ONE OF THE THIRD KAZEKAGE'S ORIGINAL JUTSU...
...ADAPTED FROM ONE USED BY THE FORMER HOST OF SHUKAKU.
IT CAN MOLD MAGNETIC SAND INTO ANY SHAPE...
...FORMING THE PERFECT WEAPON FOR EVERY SITUATION.


WELL... THAT PUPPET IS A HUMAN PUPPET, BUILT FROM A REAL CADAVER.
LIKE A BATTERY, IT KEPT WHAT CHAKRA THE BODY HAD POSSESSED IN LIFE.


WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THAT THING'S JUST A PUPPET, RIGHT?
HOW CAN A DOLL HOLD CHAKRA?

ULTIMATELY, THAT'S WHAT GIVES HIM SUCH SUPREME POWER.
CHOP
WHOM-EVER HE MAKES HIS PUPPET ...
...SASORI HAS ACCESS TO THAT PERSON'S JUTSU.
SASORI IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN PRODUCE HUMAN PUPPETS.

...
REMEMBER, OF ALL MY COLLECTION THIS ONE IS MY FAVORITE.
OH, THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT.

YOU'RE NO MATCH FOR HIM NOW... NOT WITH THIS CARD IN PLAY.
I DID NOT EXPECT THIS.
WHAT?!
SHF
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS.
SAKURA, YOU GET AWAY FROM HERE.

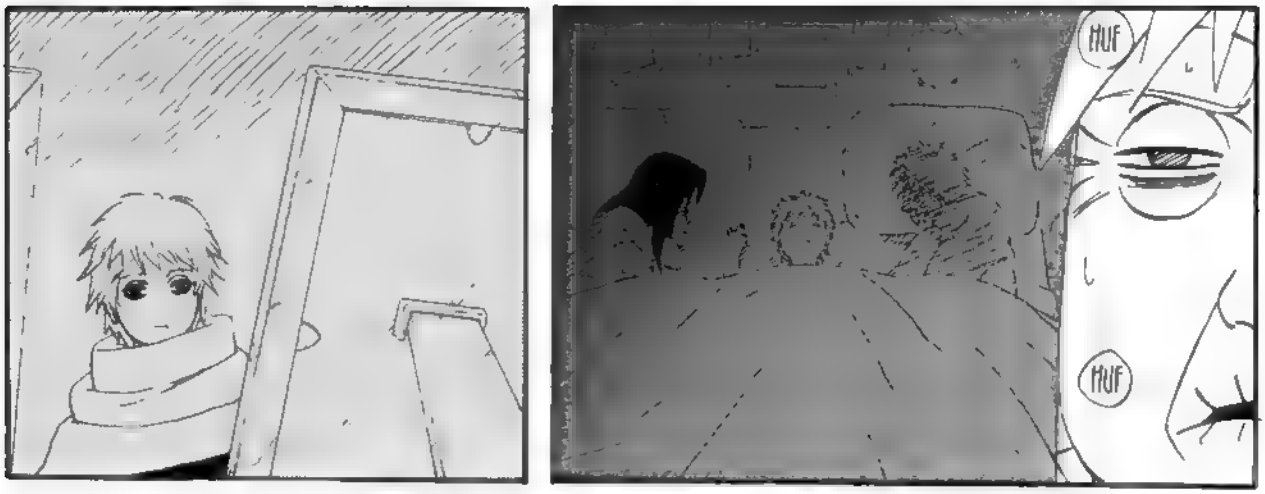
HH
FHU
FWISH
TOO LATE...
IRON SAND SHOWER!
WISH-WISH-WISH

?!
GLOW
!!
THIS IS BAD.
!!
POW POW POW POW POW POW
HOOOO
...!

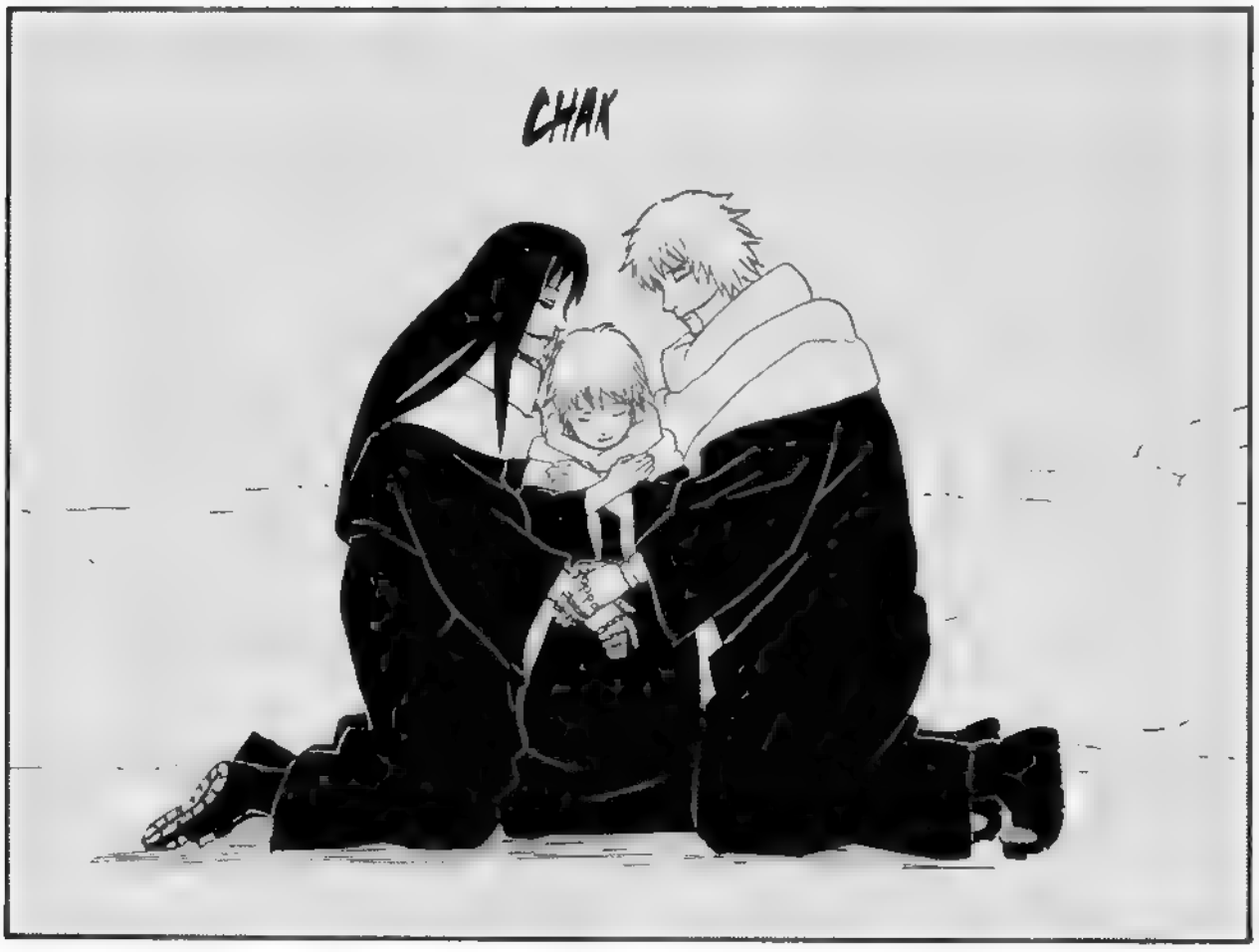
SSSSSS

QUITE AN UPGRADE SINCE LAST I PLAYED WITH THEM.
SO YOU DID FIDDLE A BIT.
CHAKRA SHIELD, HUH?

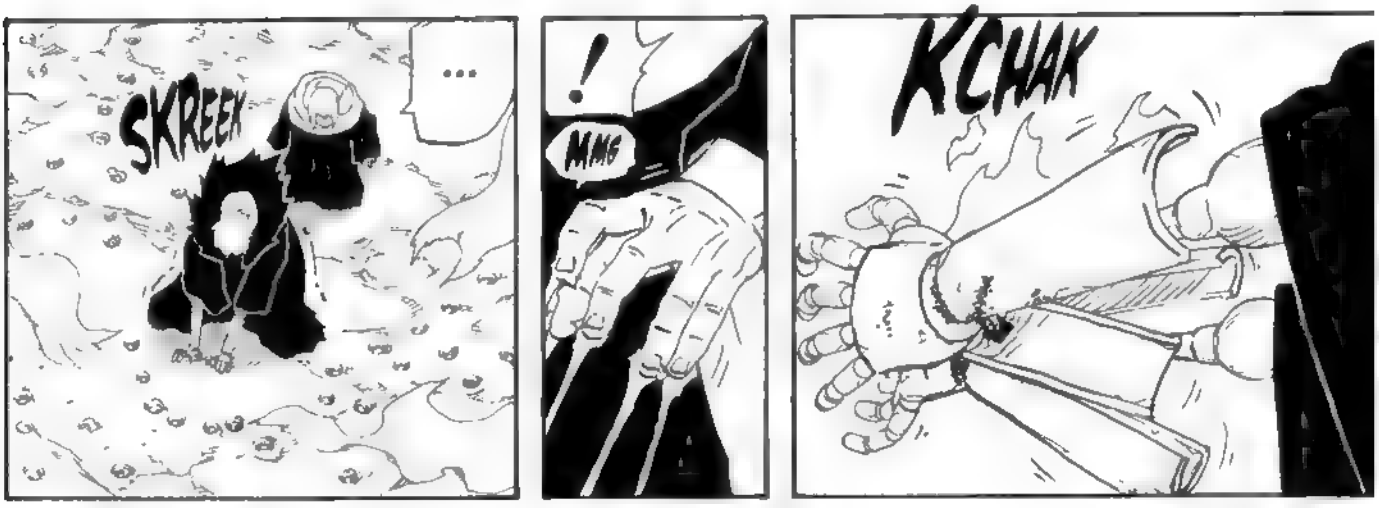
URG...
SKRRT

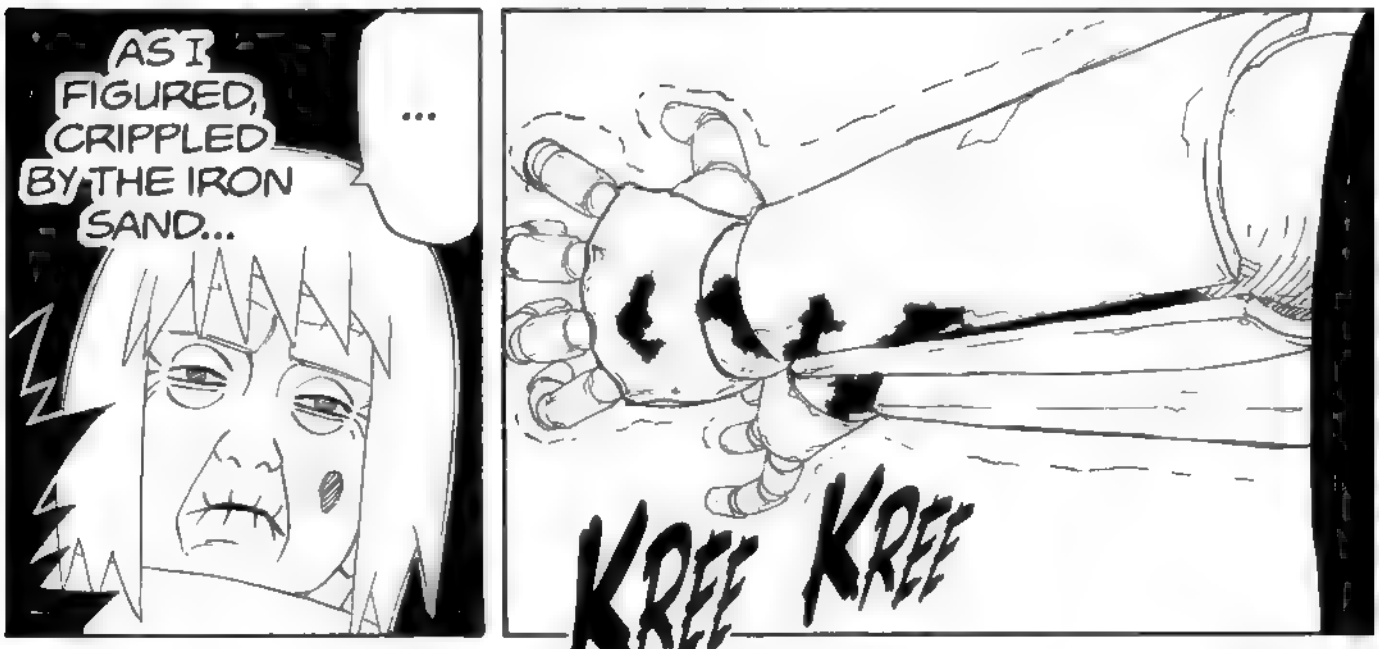

HUF
HUF

SHF
SHF
SHF


CHAK

SSSS
HUF
HUF
...


SKREEK
...
!
MMG
KCHAK

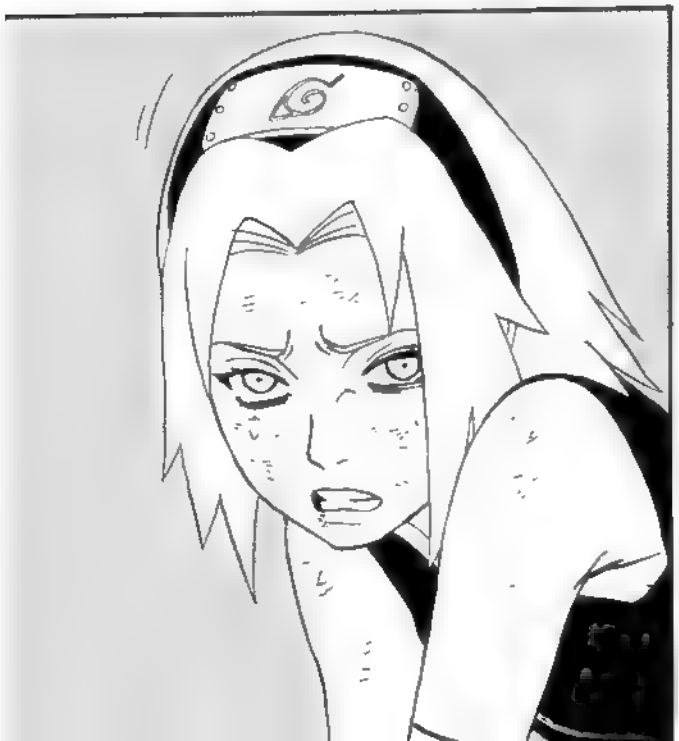

AS I FIGURED, CRIPPLED BY THE IRON SAND...
...
KREE KREE

HEE HEE...
IS THAT IT? SAVING THE GIRL IS ALL YOU COULD MANAGE?

HEH... A JUTSU YOU SHOULDN'T JUST BLOCK.
YOU SHOULD KNOW YOU HAVE TO DODGE IT.

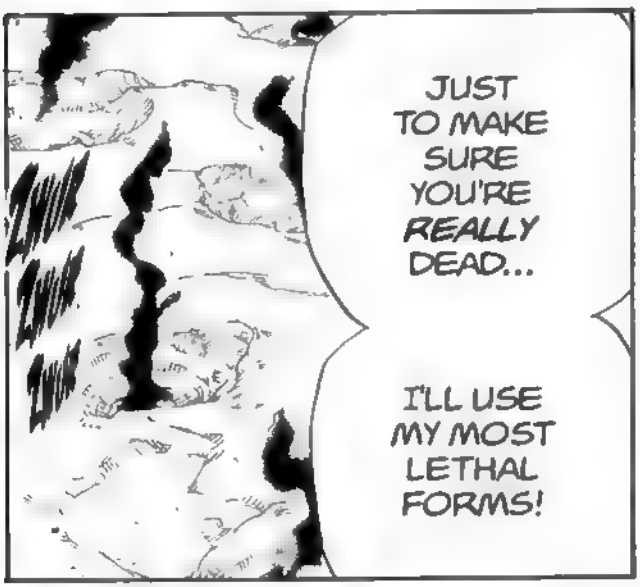
KREEK KREEK

...



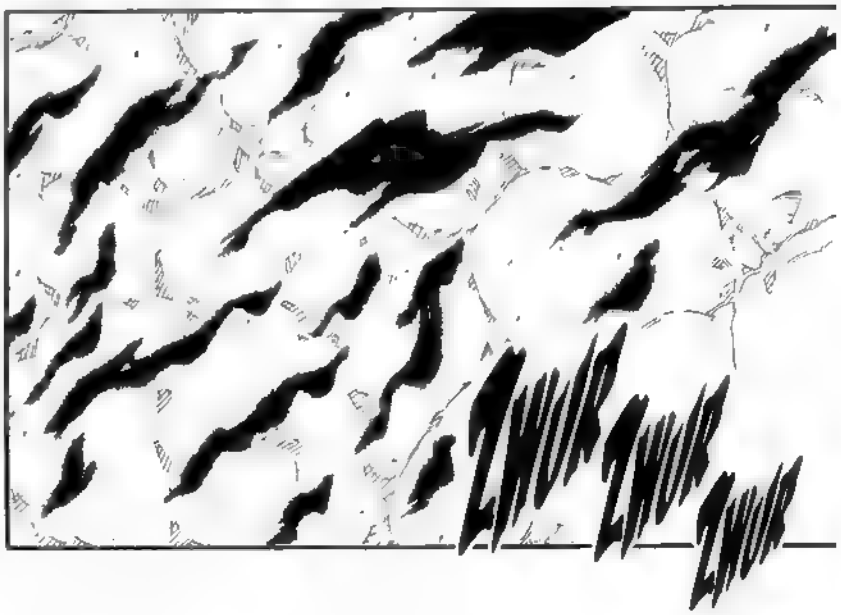
SO LONG AS I HAVE THE MAGNETIC POWER OF THE THIRD KAZEKAGE...
THE IRON SAND HAS SEEPED INTO THE DOLL.
THAT THING CAN'T LAST.

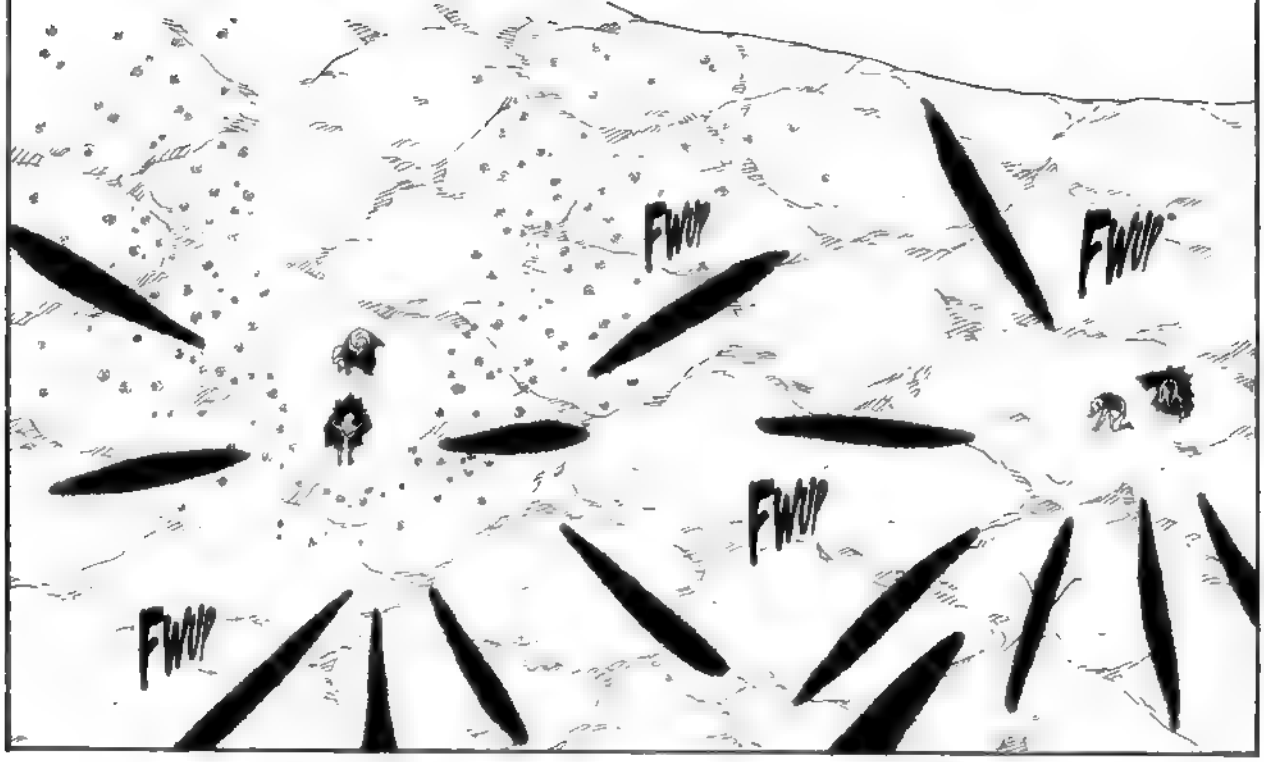
NOW...

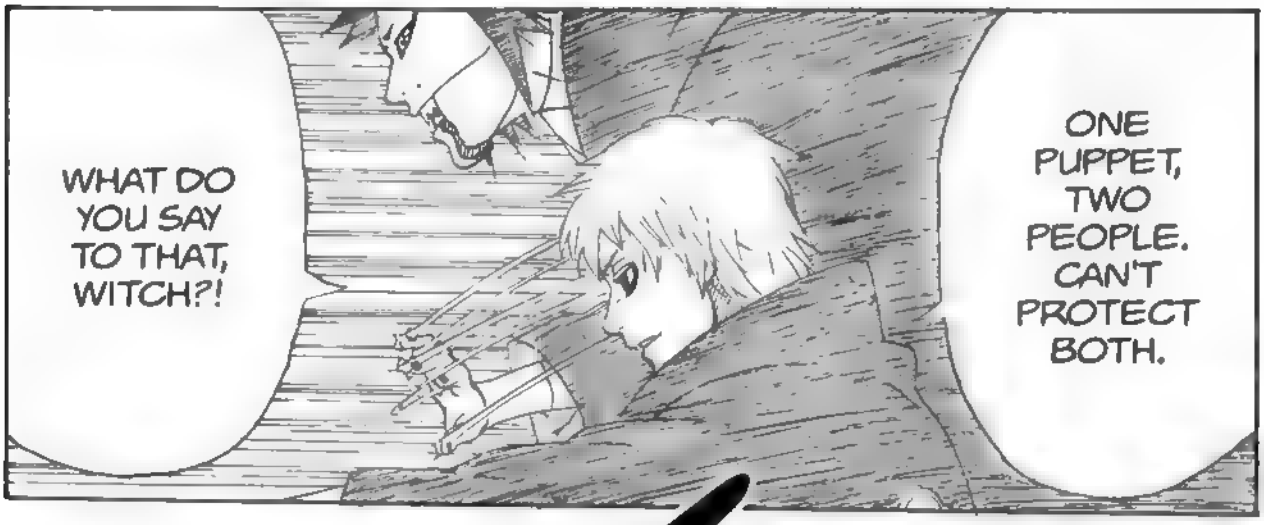

ZWUK
ZWUK
ZWUK
JUST TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE *REALLY* DEAD...
I'LL USE MY MOST LETHAL FORMS!

THIS TIME I ATTACK...
...BOTH OF YOU AT ONCE!

!


ZWUK
ZWUK
ZWUK


FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP


WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT, WITCH?!
ONE PUPPET, TWO PEOPLE. CAN'T PROTECT BOTH.

...WHICH ONE WILL DIE.
HEE HEE... LET'S SEE...
FWOOOM

NARUTO

Number 269: What Can I Do...?!

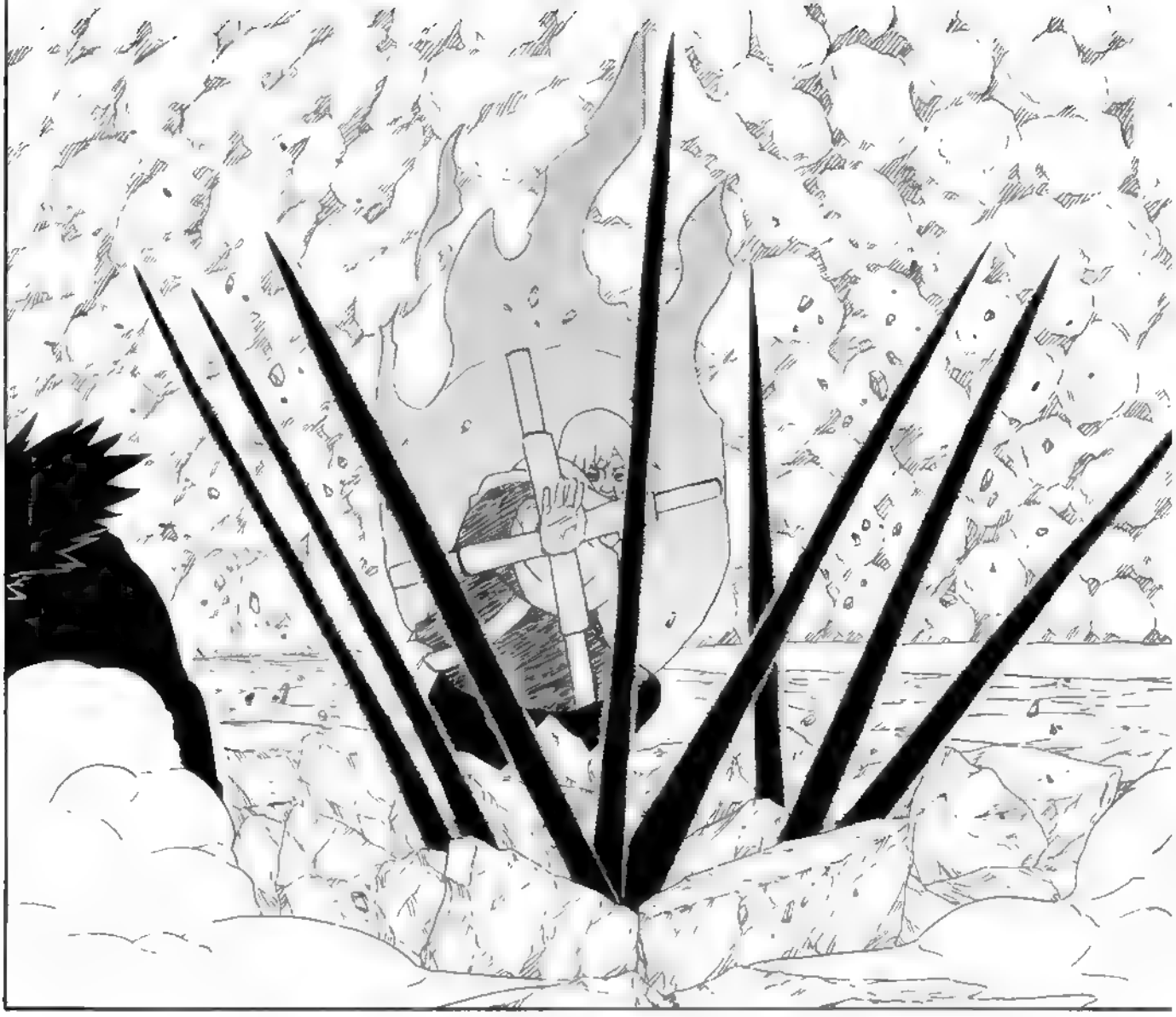
TUG
FLUP
FWOF

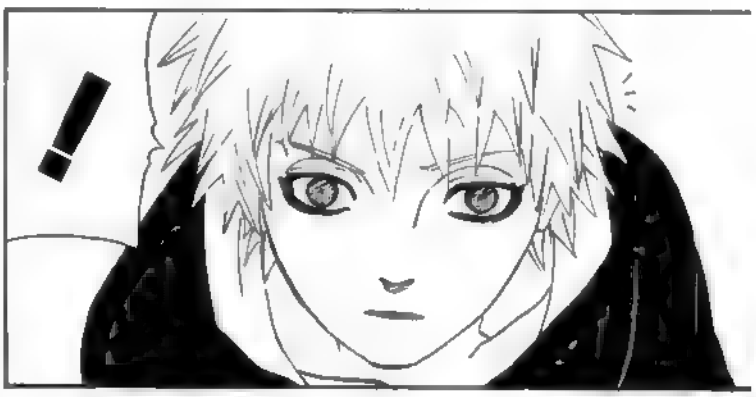
BAKOOM
BAKOOM

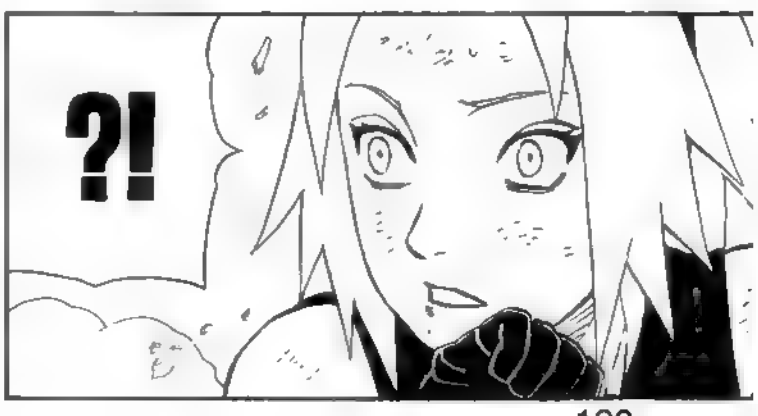
!

URG...
PLIK
PLIK

...



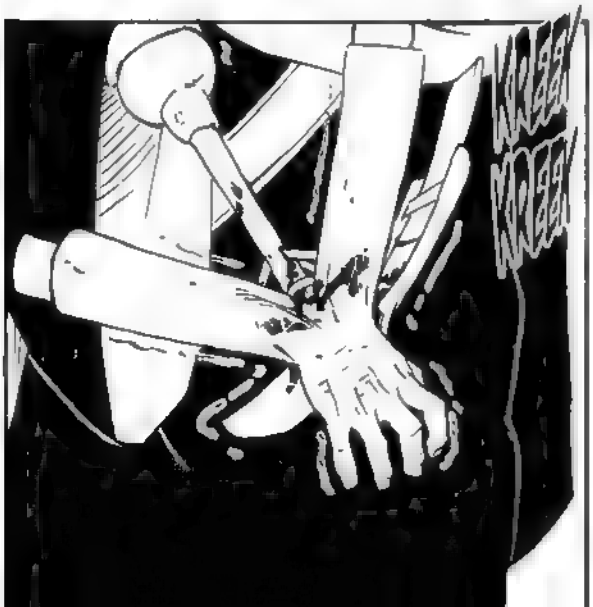




JUST AN ARM... BUT STILL, RIGGING YOUR OWN BODY...

SSSSS
...!
MUF
MUF

HEH HEH...
WE PUPPET MASTERS...
WE'RE ALL OF A KIND, HUH?

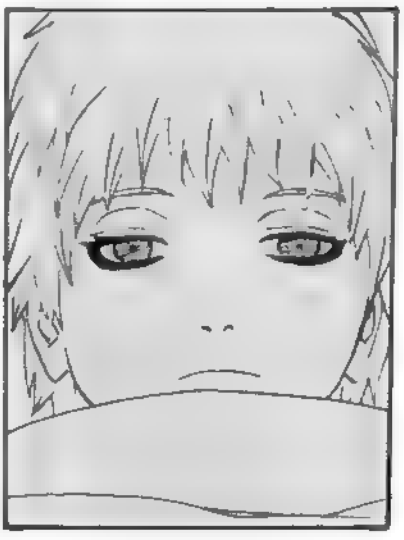

KREEE KREEE

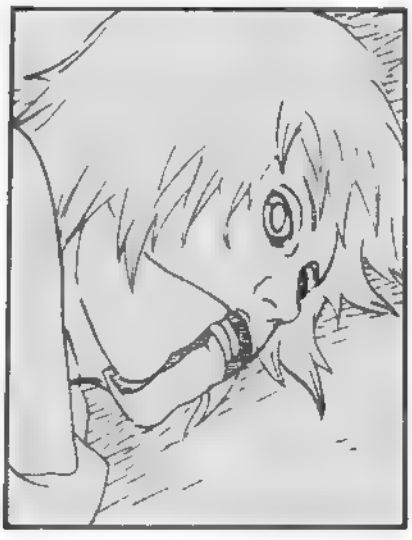
...

...

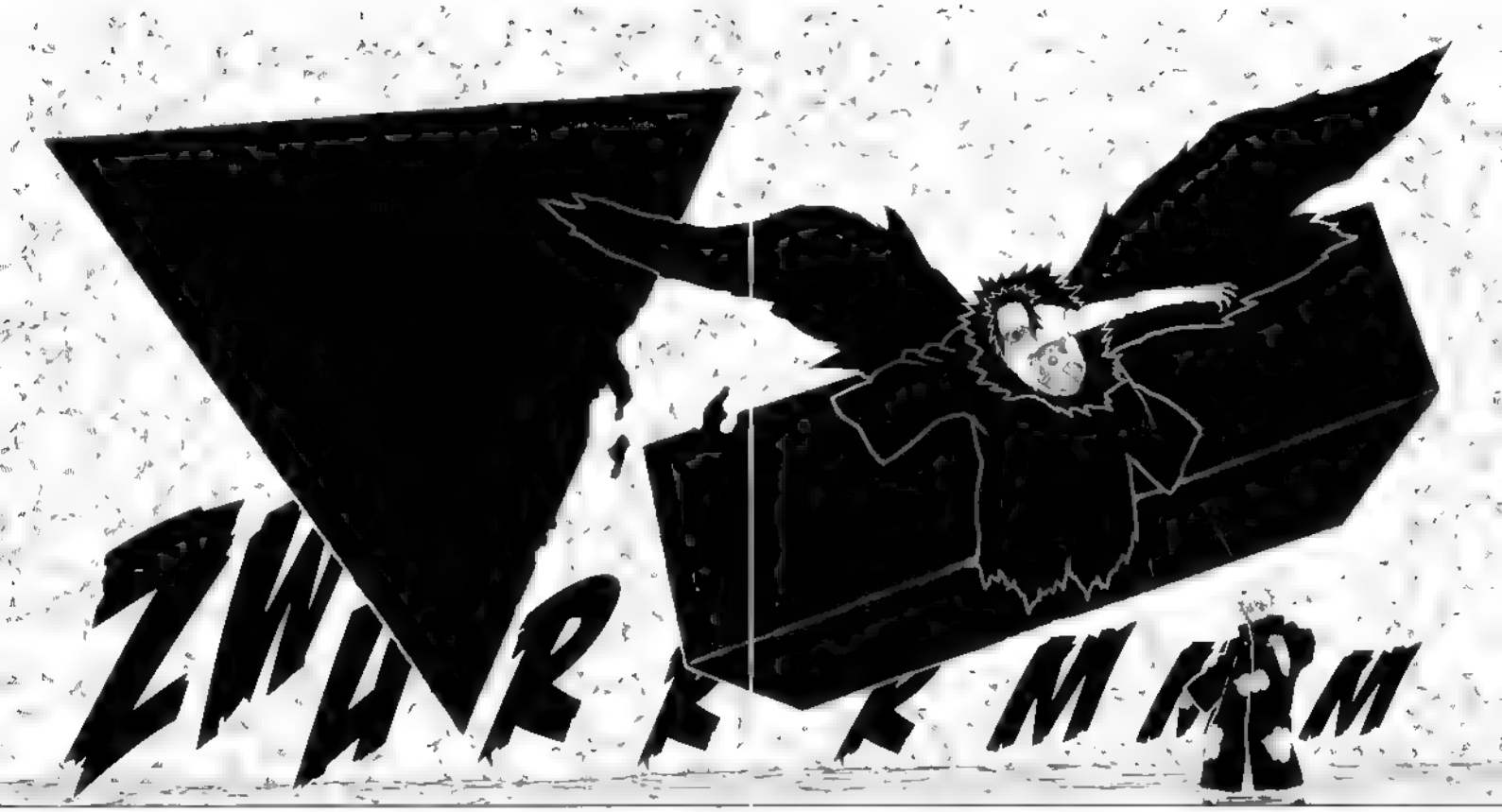
...
I SEE...
SO THAT'S WHAT YOU DID, THEN.
SPOO
?!
WELL, NOW YOU'RE OUT OF PUPPETS.
WHAT NEXT?
ONCE THE IRON SAND GETS IN, THE PUPPET IS DONE FOR.
!
KREEK KREEK

CHAK
!
SNIP
SNIP





READ THIS WAY
...
ZWOR ZWOR ZWOR
EVEN A GREAT PUPPET MASTER IS NOTHING WITHOUT A PUPPET, HUH?
HEH HEH..
ZWOR ZWOR ZWOR
ZWOR ZWOR


ZWHR

SHIVER
WHAT CAN I DO...? RIGHT NOW...

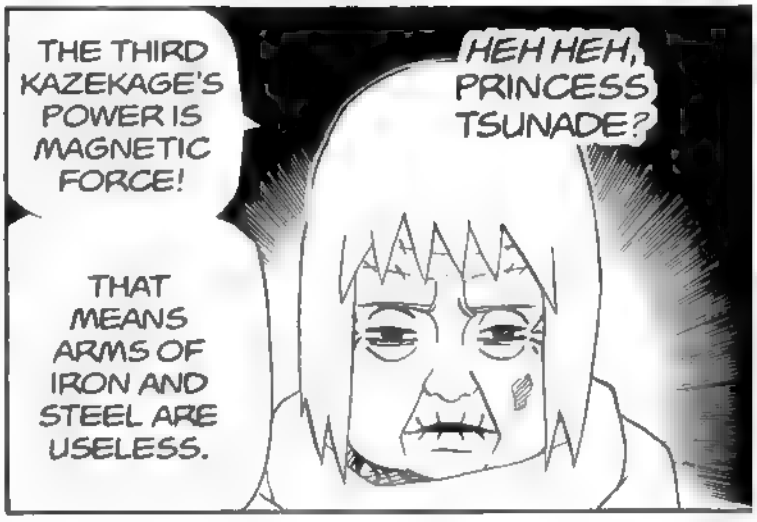
WELL, SAKURA... WHATEVER HE'S UP TO, YOU GET OUT OF HERE.
A PITY I GOT US INTO THIS JAM. INDEED, WHAT NEXT?
!!

GRIT
WHAT...
SHF
CLUTCH
!
GRANNY CHIYO...
PLEASE USE ME!
SHKK
...

READ THIS WAY
...
...IS FIGHT AS A PUPPET.
AT THIS POINT, ALL I CAN DO...
I MIGHT NOT BE RIGGED UP WITH FANCY WEAPONS, LIKE THE PUPPETS...
THAT'S OKAY.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO SUPPORT YOU AS BEFORE.
I LOST AN ARM.
SPIFF
Wss
...

...IS THE UNBENDING SPIRIT OF MY MASTER!
PLAP
PLAP
PLAP
BUT WHAT HAS BEEN HAMMERED INTO ME...

'CAUSE LIKE MY MASTER, I LEARNED TO FIGHT WITH MY BARE HANDS!
THAT'S JUST SWELL!
PA
MM


THE THIRD KAZEKAGE'S POWER IS MAGNETIC FORCE!
THAT MEANS ARMS OF IRON AND STEEL ARE USELESS.
HEH HEH, PRINCESS TSUNADE?

FWUP
HOW TEDIOUS.
THIS AGAIN?

OK
FWISH
GHURM
SHWEE

BA-
KOON
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BA
!
BA! DOOM

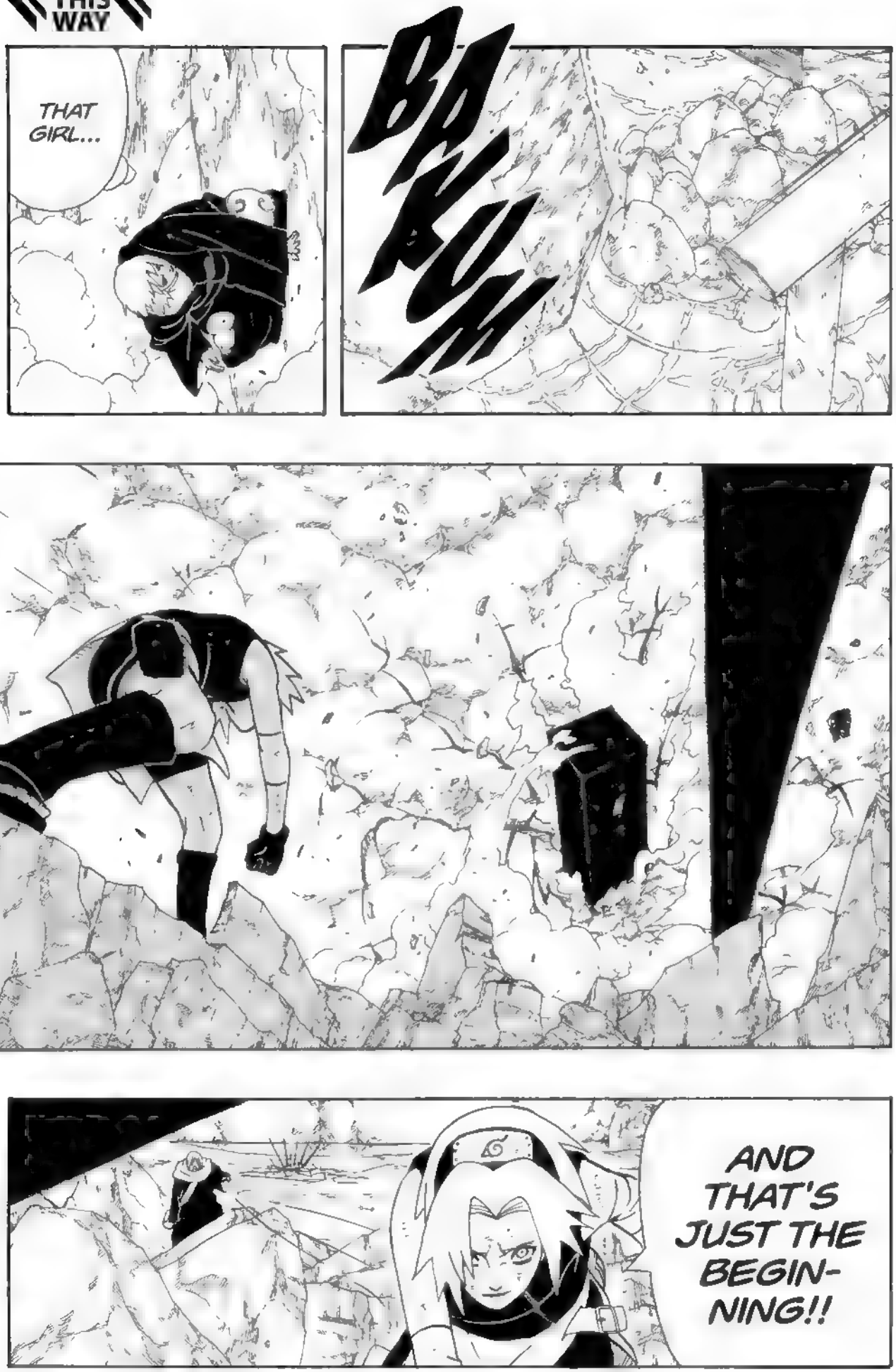
WHAM

FUMP
SHKK

FOOSH

HERE I COME!

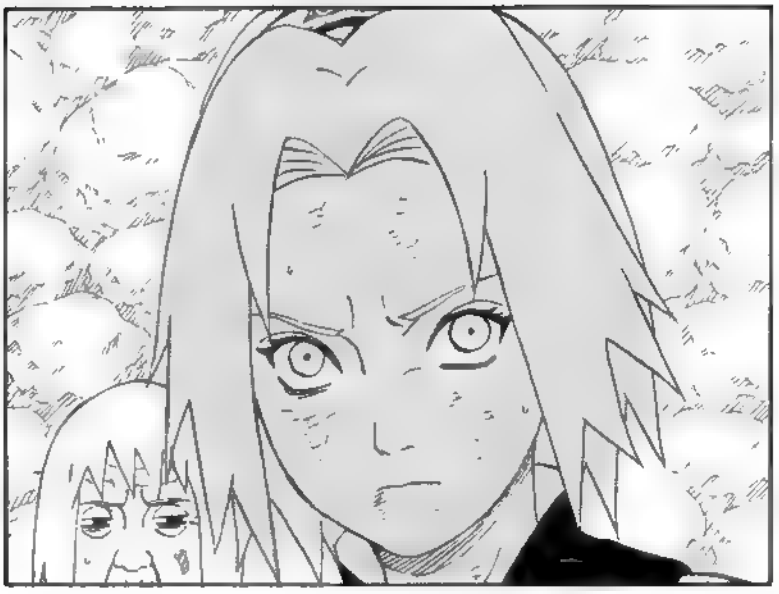
!


THAT GIRL...
BAKU
AND THAT'S JUST THE BEGIN-NING!!

NARUTO

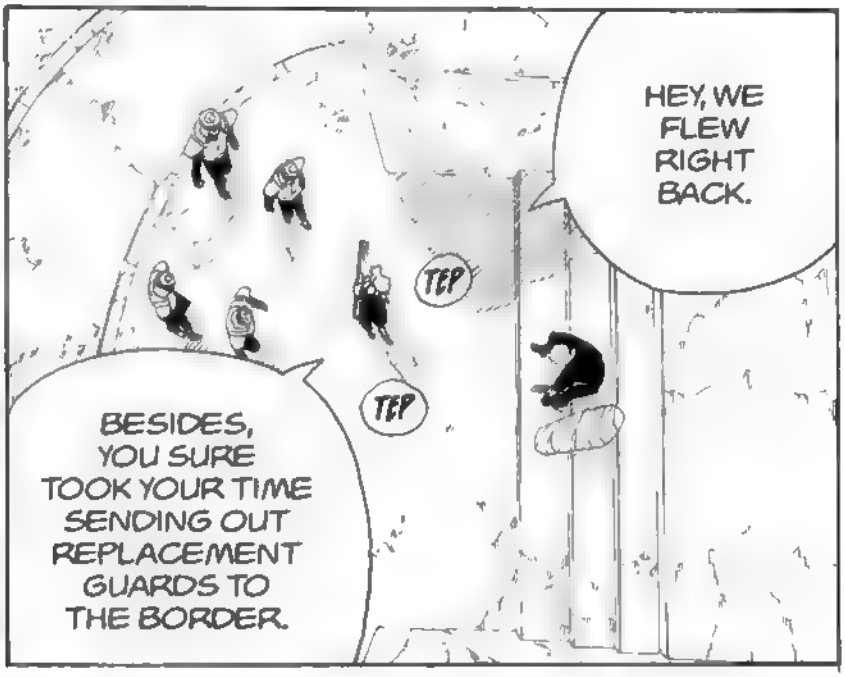
Number 270: Miscalculation...!!

Number 270: Miscalculation...!!



WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?

IF ANY-ONE'S TO BLAME HERE...
HUH
HUH

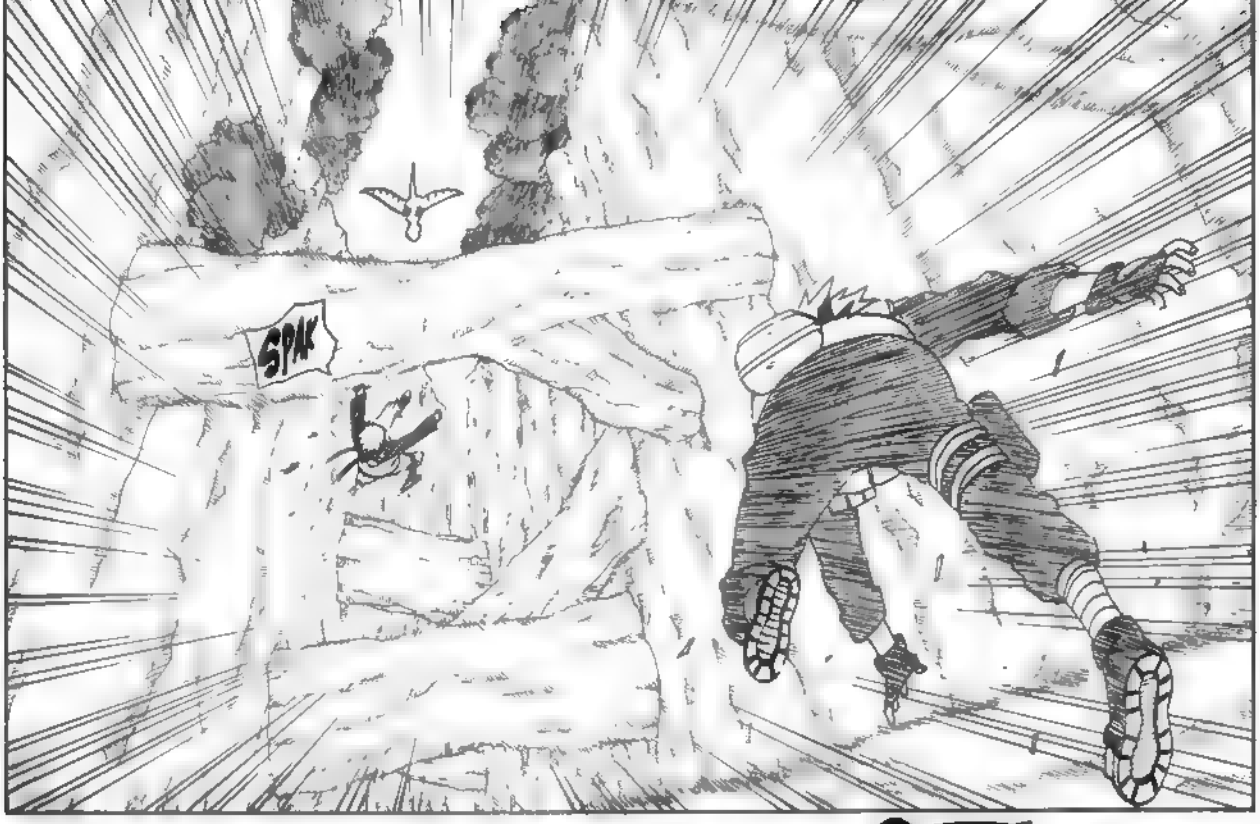

HEY, WE FLEW RIGHT BACK.
TEP
TEP
BESIDES, YOU SURE TOOK YOUR TIME SENDING OUT REPLACEMENT GUARDS TO THE BORDER.

HMPH..
WOOF

SO LET'S DROP IT OKAY?
HEY! BUT I'M STILL RECOVERING.
AND YET I DID ALL YOU ASKED OF ME.

LET'S MOVE ON, SHALL WE?
SHF
RIGHT, THEN...

STAY CLOSE TO ME!!
NARUTO, WAIT!


SPAK

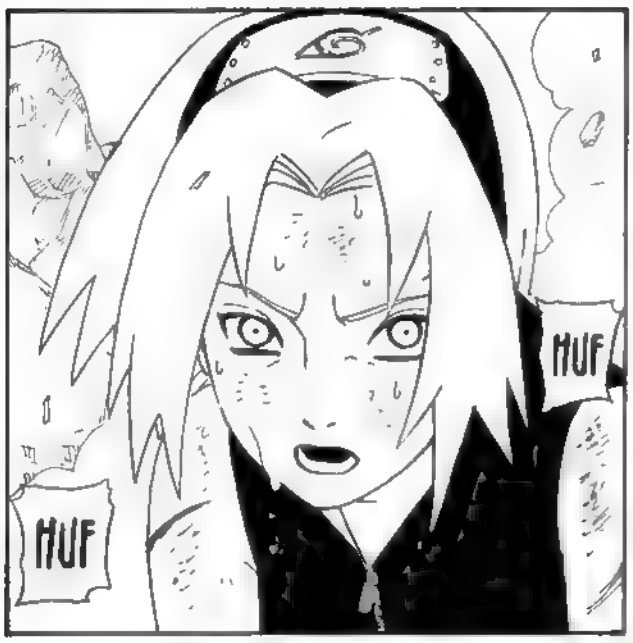
AND NOW I'VE THIS MIRROR NINJA, KAKASHI, TO DEAL WITH.
OKAY... SO I PLEDGED TO TAKE ON THE JINCHÛRIKI HOST, BUT I'M OUT OF CLAY BOMBS.

FOOM

WE'RE WAY OUT OF WIRE-LESS RANGE...!!
WE'VE STRAYED TOO FAR FROM SAKURA AND THE REST.

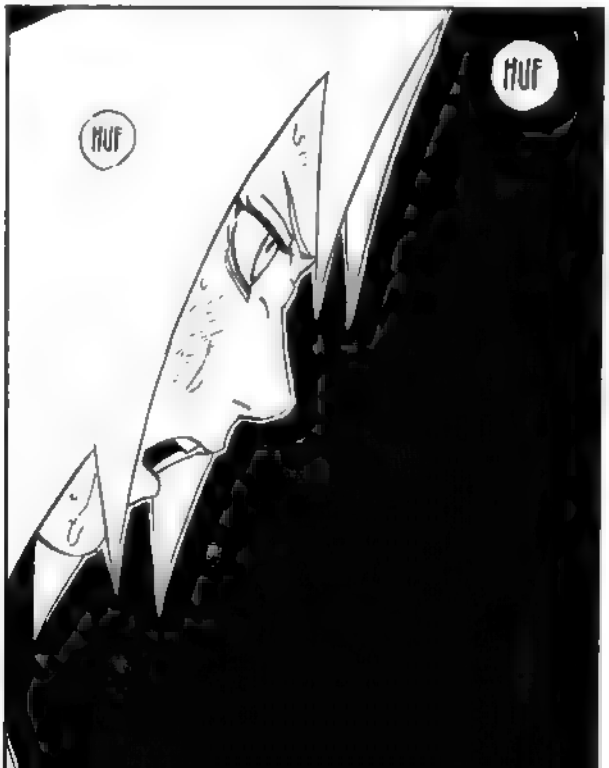
WHAT TO DO? HMM...
TUP

PAKUM PUM PUM


HUF
HUF

CRUMBLE
QUITE A BIG PUNCH FOR A LITTLE GIRL.

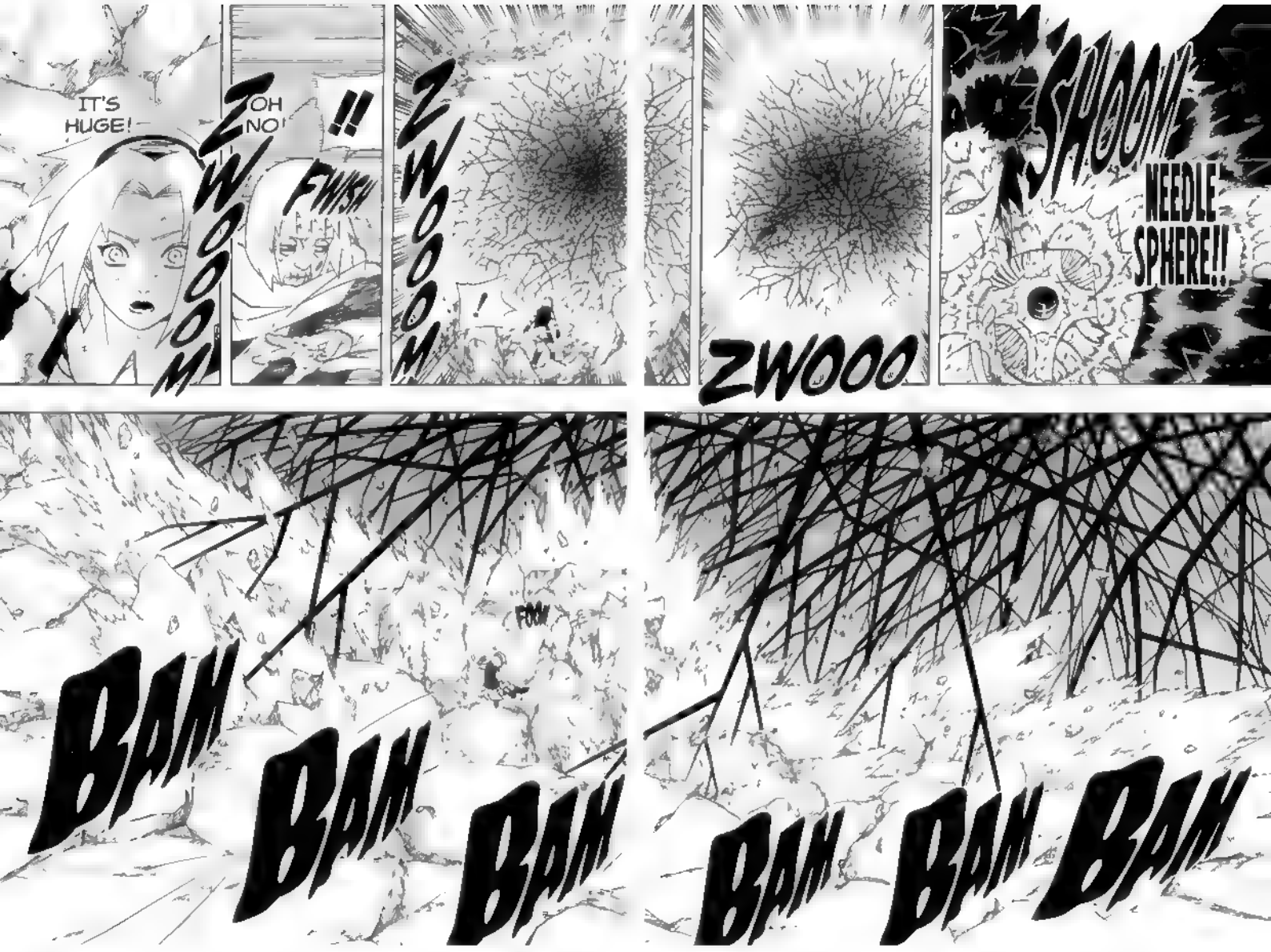
IN THIS SHORT TIME, SHE'S STARTED TO READ SASORI'S OFFENSIVE PATTERN.
THAT GIRL IS AMAZING.

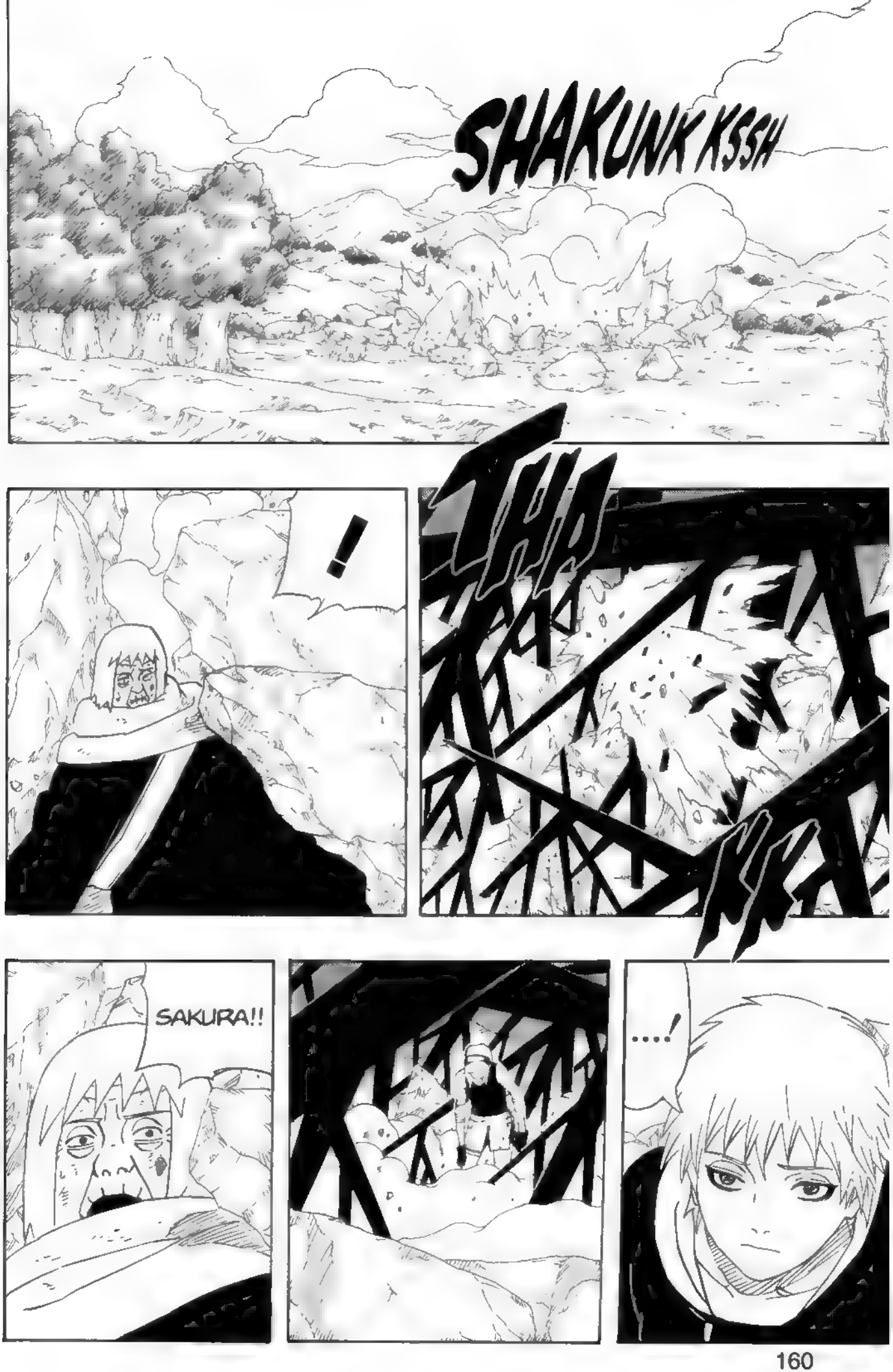

HUF
HUF

TSUNADE... YOU CHOSE WELL.
AT THIS POINT, SHE DOESN'T REALLY NEED MY SUPPORT. I WOULD NEVER HAVE DREAMED SHE WAS THIS GOOD...
HUF
HUF

LISTEN, SAKURA. FOR A MEDIC NINJA, OFFENSE ALWAYS COMES SECOND.
CAN YOU TELL ME WHY?
THE ROLE OF THE MEDIC NINJA IS TO SUPPORT THE TEAM.
SO DURING BATTLE, PROVIDING MEDICAL AID IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FIGHTING THE ENEMY!
WRONG!!
WHAH ?!
HUH
A MEDIC NINJA MUST NEVER GET HIT BY AN ENEMY STRIKE.
THEREFORE YOUR FIRST PRIORITY MUST BE EVASION.
...
WHY IS THAT?
...
HUF

WHO WOULD TREAT THE INJURED?
IF A MEDIC NINJA SHOULD DIE...
FROM HIS HAND AND ARM GESTURES, I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE DIRECTION OF HIS ATTACKS...
BEFORE HE CAN STRIKE, HE MUST MOVE HIS FINGER. THAT'S THE WEAKNESS OF A PUPPET MASTER.
DURING THIS SESSION, YOU MUST DODGE ALL MY ATTACKS.
I WON'T GO EASY ON YOU.
NOW. I WILL ATTACK YOU IN EARNEST.
PLOFF
I GUESS I HAVE TO WASTE SOME CHAKRA. THIS SHOULD FINISH HER OFF.
THE GIRL IS A HAWK. AT THIS RATE, I COULD BE HERE FOREVER.
FINISH


IT'S HUGE!
ZWOOOM
OH NO!
!!
FWISH
ZWOOOM!
ZWOOO
SHOOM
NEEDLE SPHERE!!
FOW
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM

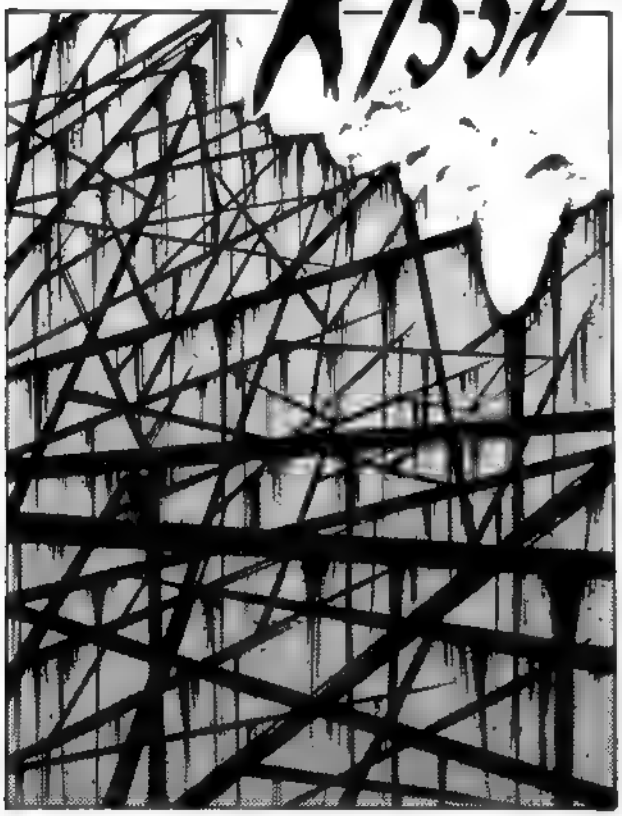

SHAKUNKXSSH
!
THA
KR
SAKURA!!
....!

READ THIS WAY
PLIP PLIP
SAKURA! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
EVEN A SCRATCH WILL PROVE FATAL.
huf
huf
FWIN
SHE'S INJURED!
!!

THE IRON SAND IS SOAKED IN POISON!
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?
THAT THERE WAS MORE TO IT?
!
THUD
IT NUMBS THE BODY PRETTY RAPIDLY.
HEH... THE POISON IS STARTING ITS WORK.
LEFT ALONE, SHE MAY LAST... THREE DAYS.
THUD

FWOO
BUT I'LL FINISH HER NOW.
SH
I'M STUCK ...
!
MMG
SHING

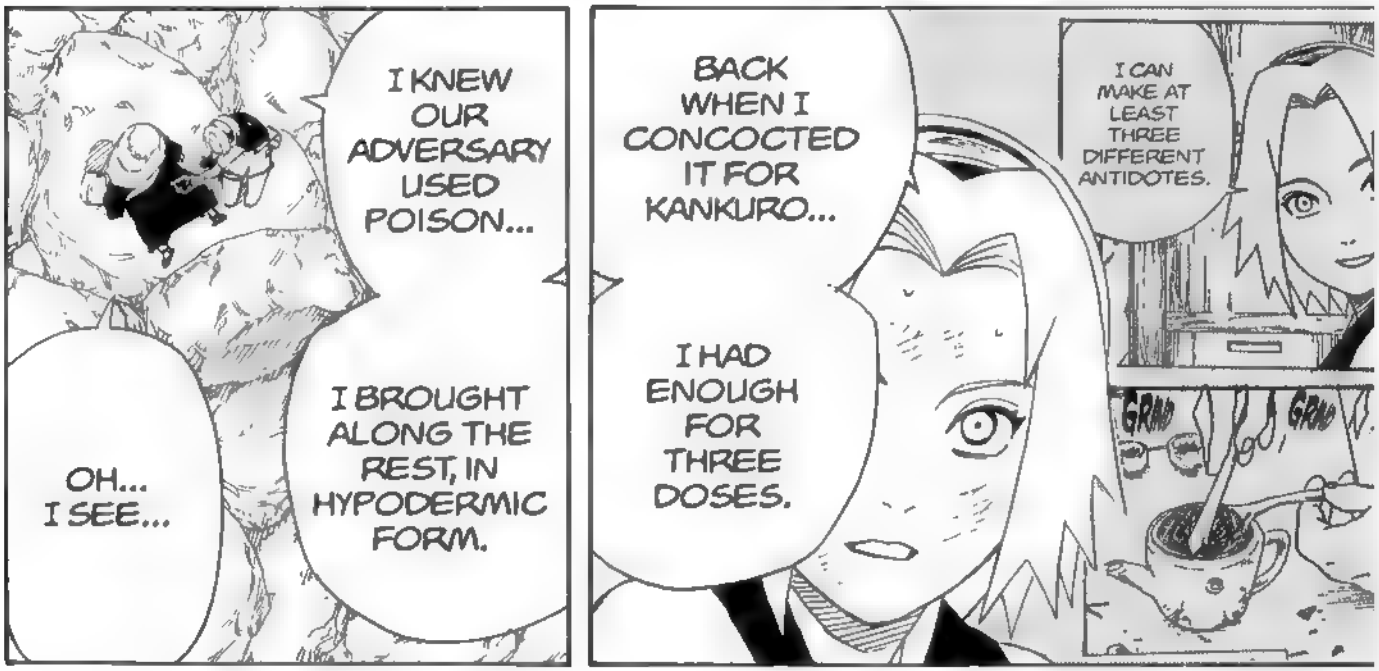
SPARK

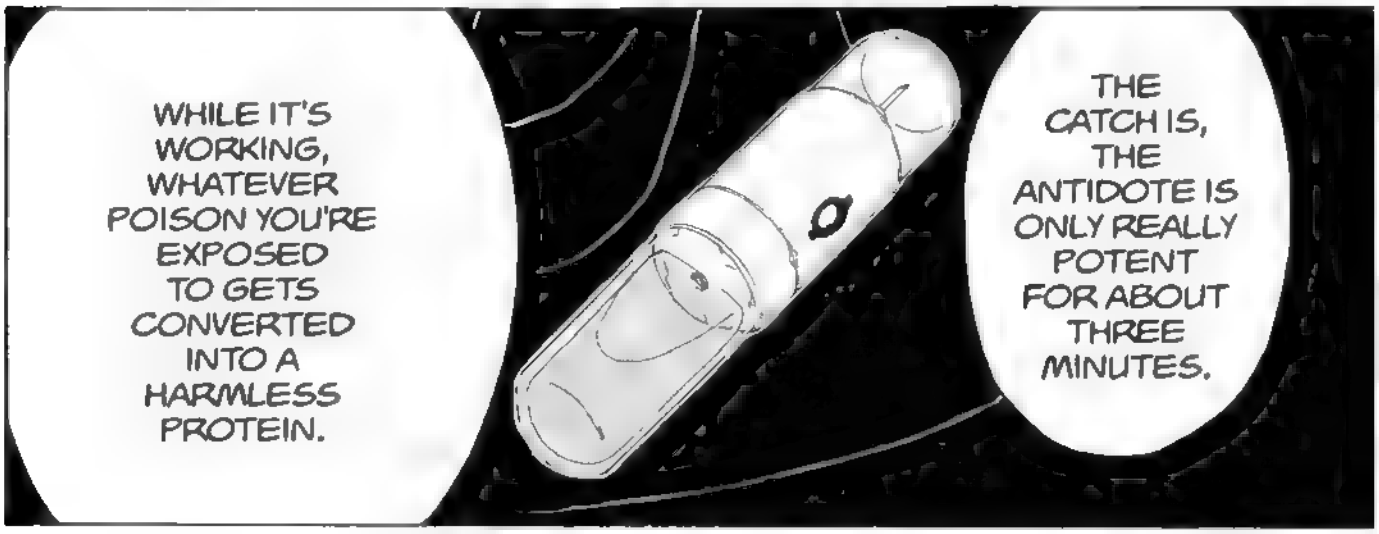

KISSH

SAKURA... HOW...
KRUNK

SHISSH
TAKK

BUT WHEN...
THERE'S ONE LEFT.
GRANNY CHIYO, I WANT YOU TO KEEP IT.
I USED THE ANTIDOTE ...
SHF

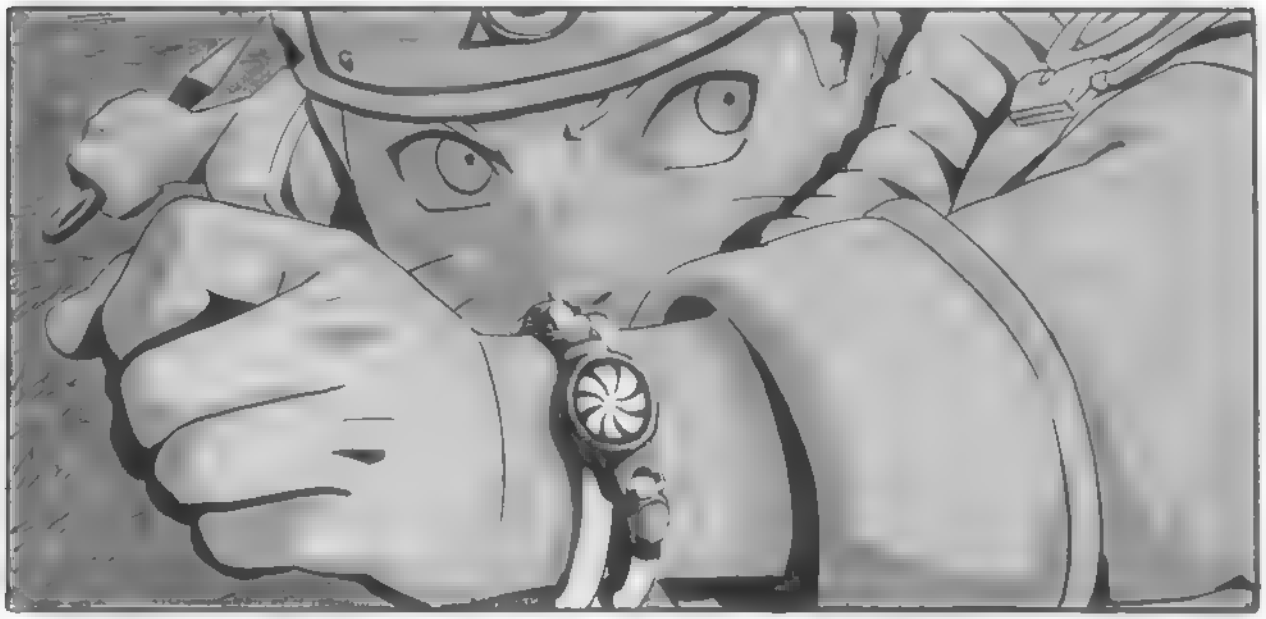

I KNEW OUR ADVERSARY USED POISON...
I BROUGHT ALONG THE REST, IN HYPODERMIC FORM.
OH... I SEE...
BACK WHEN I CONCOCTED IT FOR KANKURO...
I HAD ENOUGH FOR THREE DOSES.
I CAN MAKE AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT ANTIDOTES.
GRND
GRND

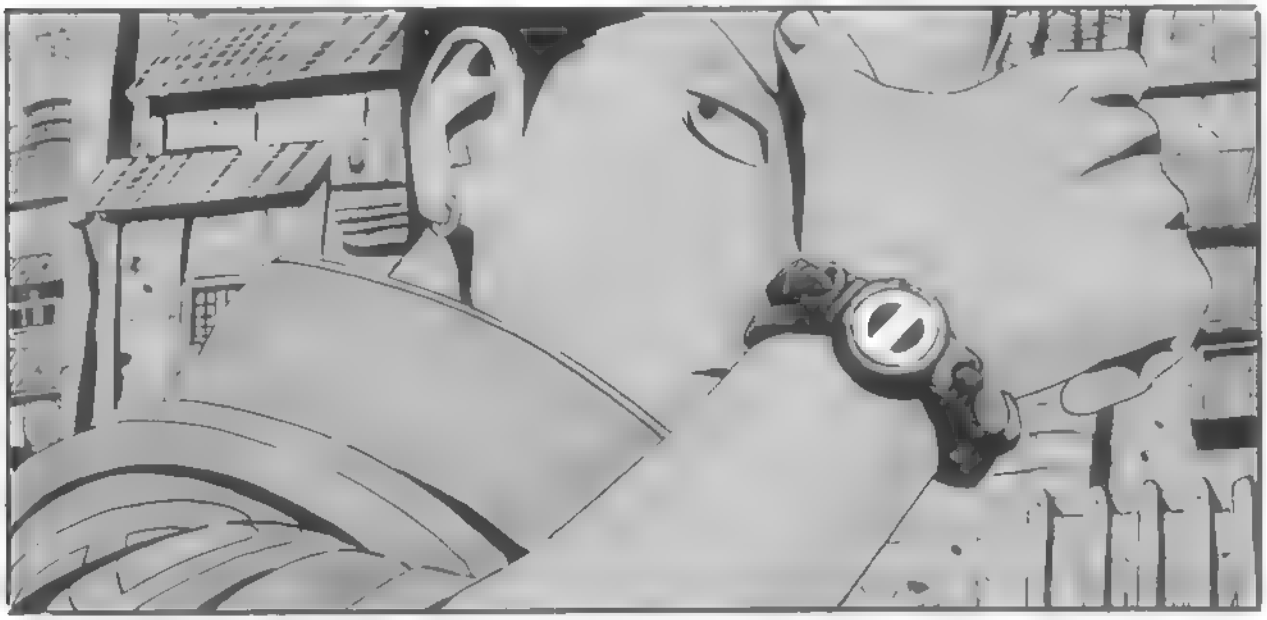

WHILE IT'S WORKING, WHATEVER POISON YOU'RE EXPOSED TO GETS CONVERTED INTO A HARMLESS PROTEIN.
THE CATCH IS, THE ANTIDOTE IS ONLY REALLY POTENT FOR ABOUT THREE MINUTES.

SO I HAD TO HANG ON TO IT UNTIL THE VERY LAST MOMENT.
I FIGURED HIS GUARD WOULD BE LOWEST AFTER HE'D PLAYED HIS FINAL CARD. THAT IT'D BE OUR ONLY CHANCE.
I DIDN'T WANT SASORI TO KNOW I HAD IT...
SSSSSS
...
WE ONLY HAVE THIS CHANCE!
FOR THE NEXT THREE MINUTES OR SO, HIS POISON WON'T AFFECT ME.
IT'S TIME TO END THIS FIGHT.
UNDER-STOOD.

NARUTO

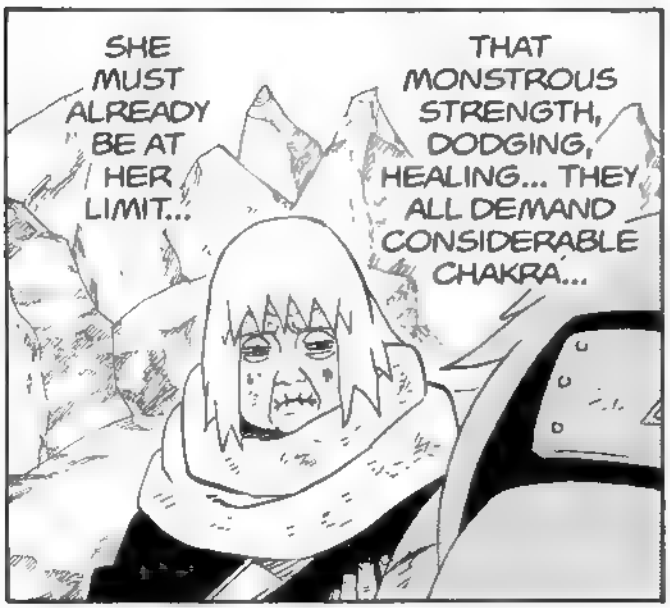
Number 271: Unknown Power...!!zz





DAN

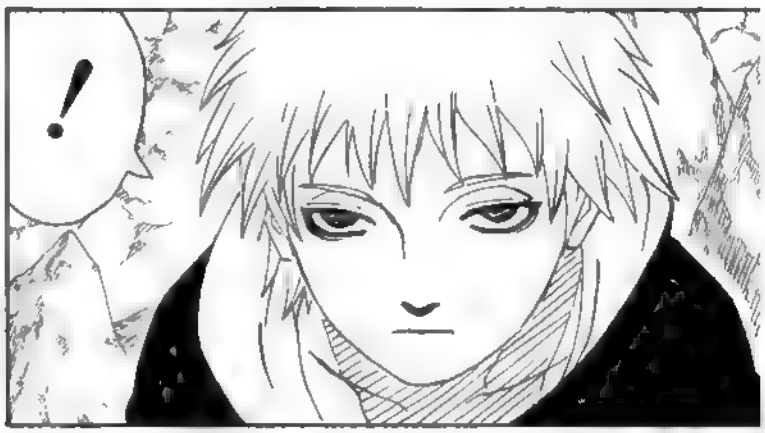
SAKURA, MY HAND IS FINE NOW.
SSSSS
GRP


SHE MUST ALREADY BE AT HER LIMIT...
THAT MONSTROUS STRENGTH, DODGING, HEALING... THEY ALL DEMAND CONSIDERABLE CHAKRA...

HUF
HUF
HUF

...
CAN WE START NOW, GRANNY CHIYO?
SHK
WE HAVE NO TIME...

SURE ...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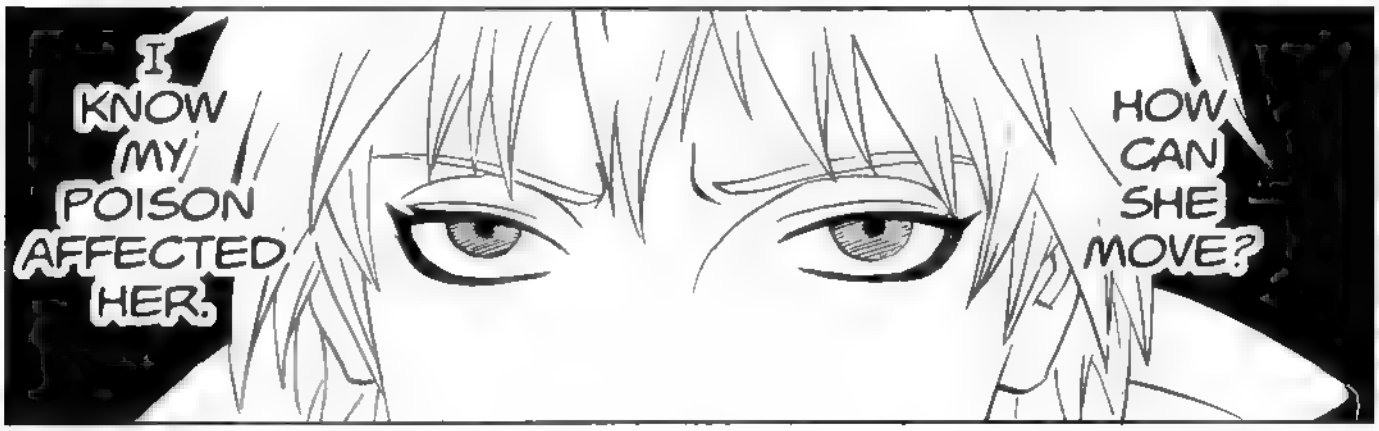
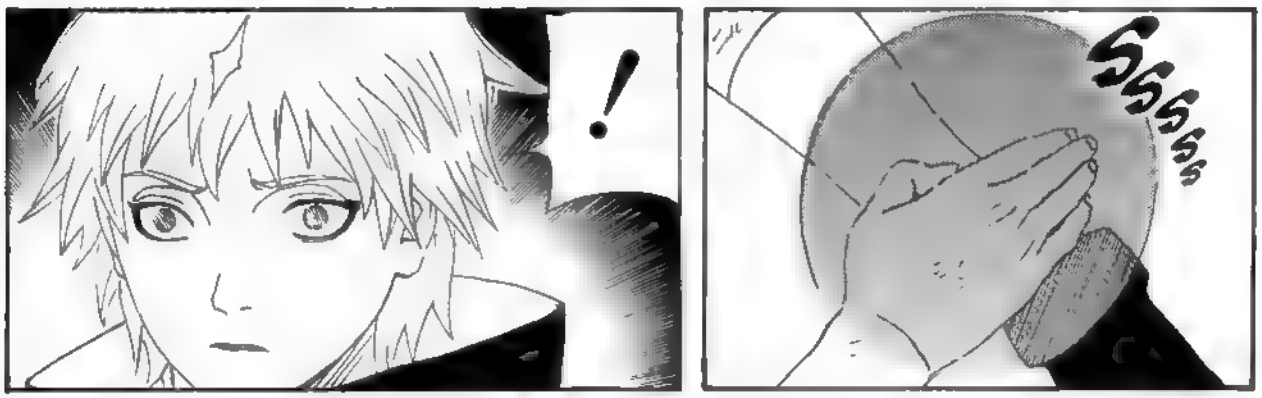

I KNOW MY POISON AFFECTED HER.
HOW CAN SHE MOVE?

SHE DETOXI-FIED IT!
WAIT, NO...
HUF
...
FWIP
HUF
YOU HAVE TWO, MAYBE THREE DAYS... WE BOTH KNOW HOW THIS IS GOING TO END.
THE POISION'S SPREAD-ING.
!
BUT HOW?!
COULD THEY HAVE USED THAT POISON? NO... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
IT'S POINT-LESS TO STRUGGLE.

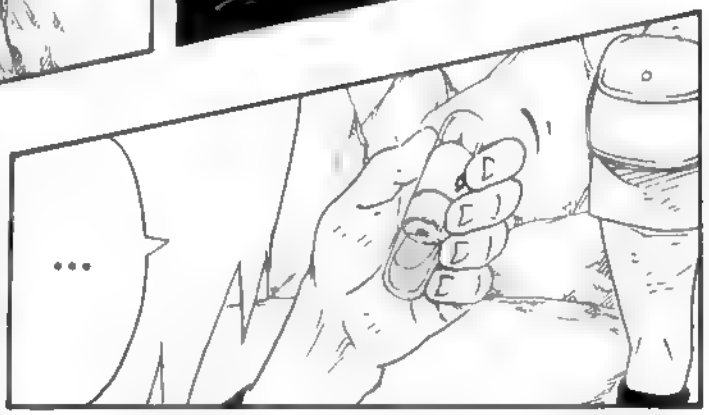
AND YET... WAS IT THE WITCH? NO, I DOUBT THAT...
THE ANTIDOTE IS PROHIBITIVELY DIFFICULT TO MIX. IF THERE'S EVEN THE SLIGHTEST MISTAKE... EVEN I NEED TO REFERENCE THE MIX RATIO TABLE, AND I CREATED IT.

SO THAT BRAT IS A MEDIC NINJA...
URK..
GLUGH

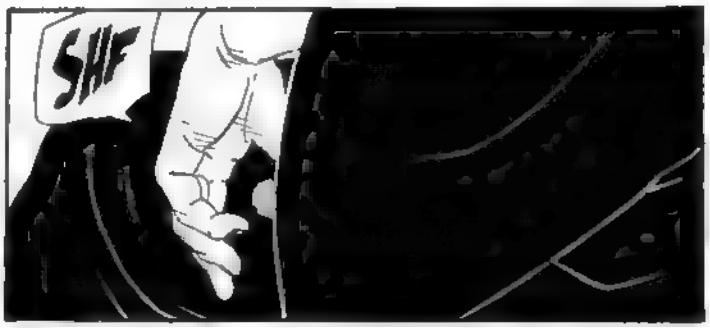

!
SSSSS

DID SHE...?

TIME TO REFOCUS THE REST OF MY CHAKRA TO ATTACK! WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE MINUTES TO DO THIS, AND WE WON'T HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE.
WELL, I STAUNCHED THE MAJOR BLEEDING ANYWAY ...
FSSSS


...

SHIVER

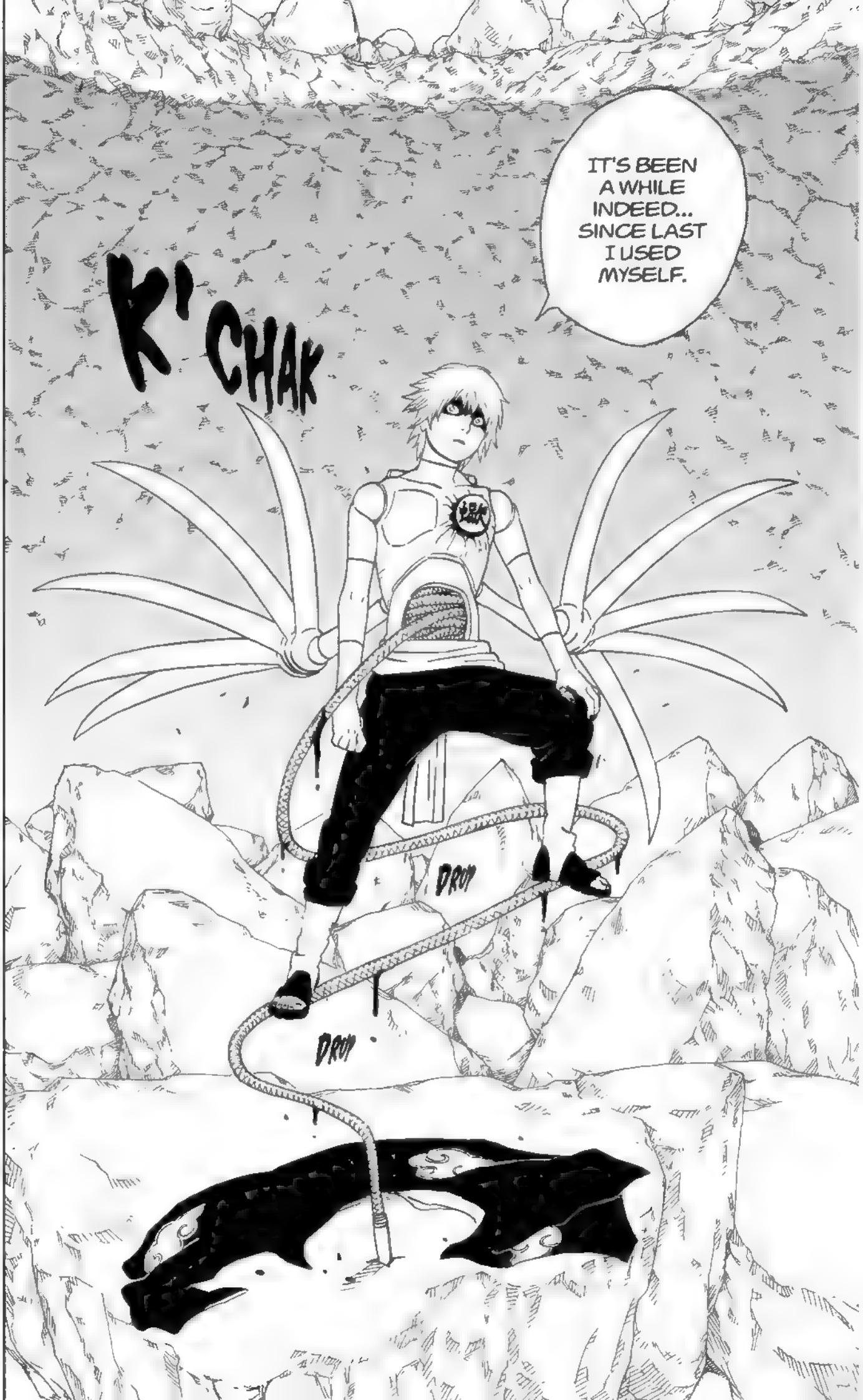

SHF

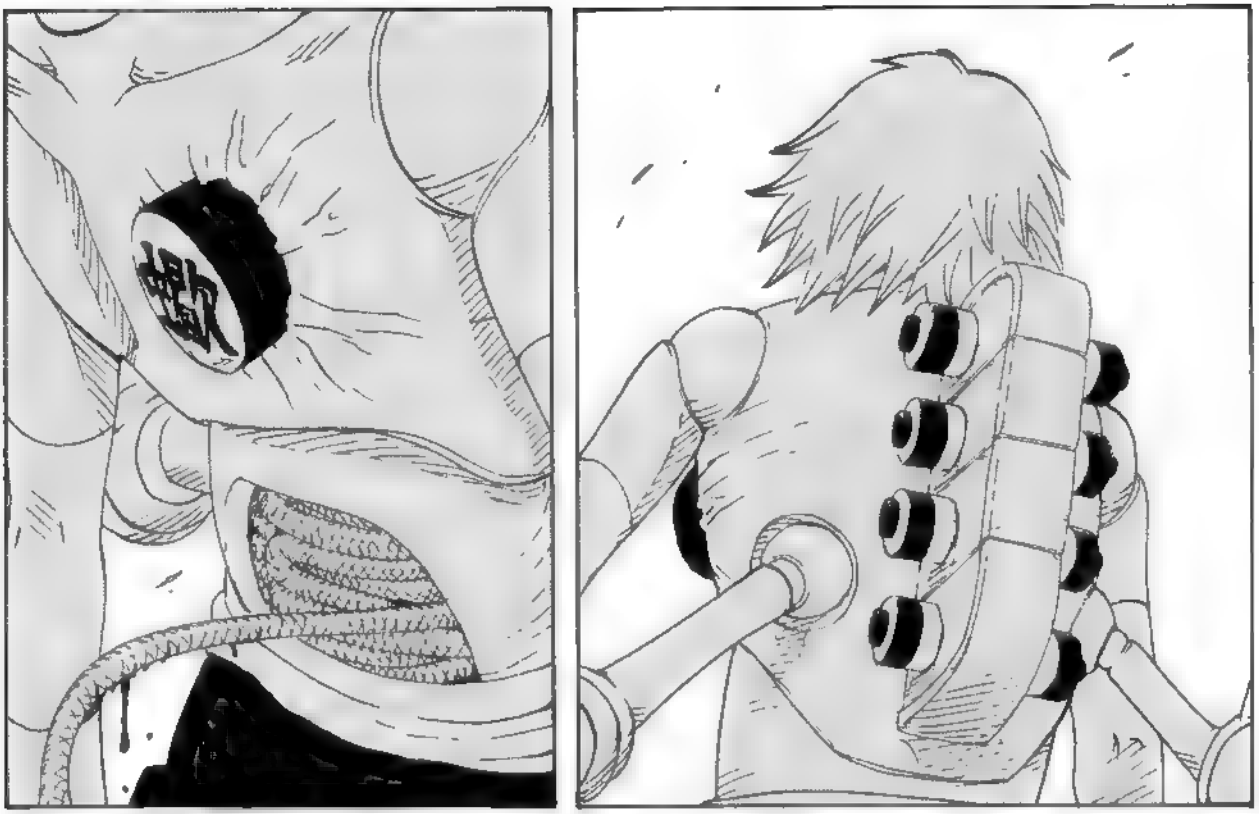
...

YES.
TUG
LET'S GO, SAKURA.

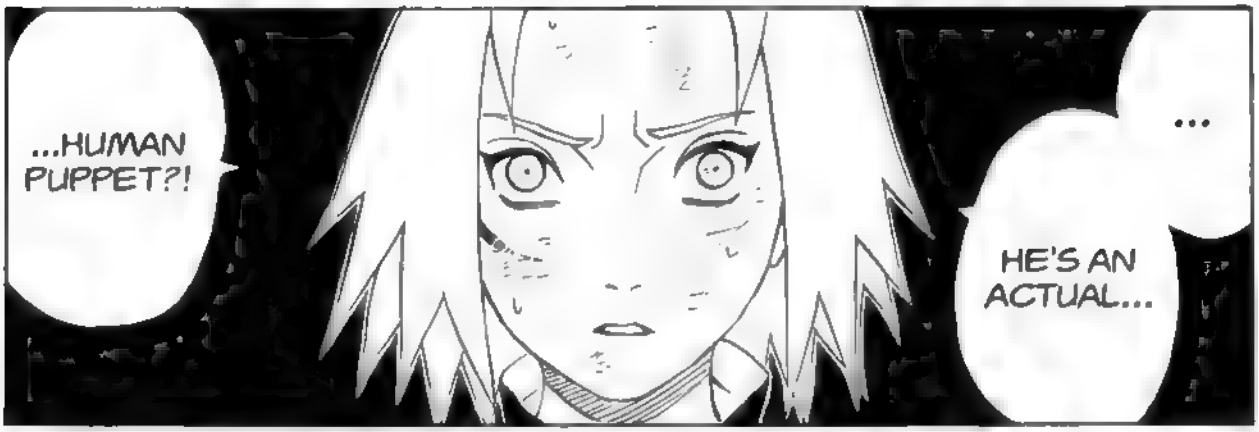
HMPH... I ADMIT, SHE IS QUITE A GIRL.
SNAP
SNAP

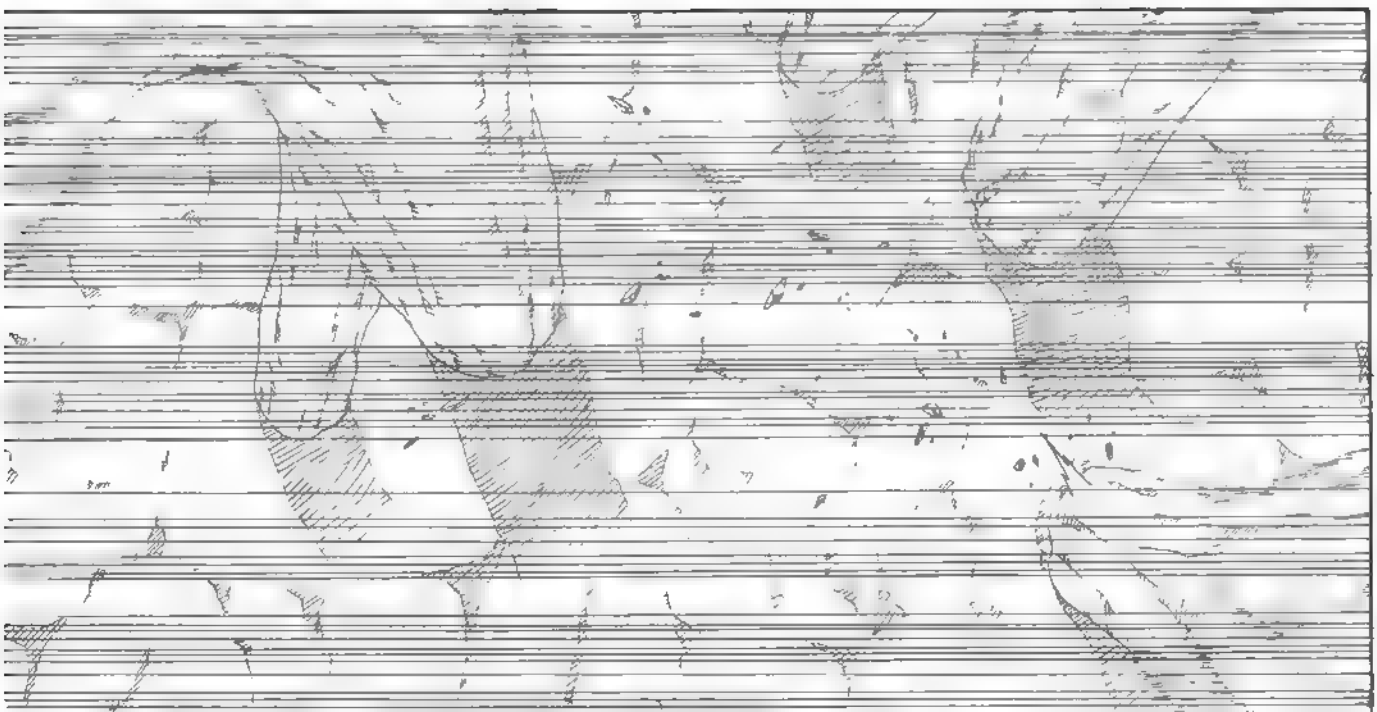
SHFF
I HAVEN'T BEEN FORCED TO SOLVE A PROBLEM THIS WAY SINCE I JOINED THE AKATSUKI.
I WONDER HOW LONG IT'S BEEN...
FLOP
SLUFF
IT'S PROBABLY A WASTE TO USE OTHER HUMAN PUPPETS.
NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE THIRD KAZEKAGE DESTROYED
...
HE HASN'T AGED AT ALL. HE STILL LOOKS AS HE DID...
...LONG AGO.
WHA... WHAT IS THAT?!
...
?!
K'CHAK
WELL, THERE'S THE REASON WHY.


IT'S BEEN A WHILE INDEED... SINCE LAST I USED MYSELF.
K' CHAK
DROP
DROP



(KANJI: SCORPION)



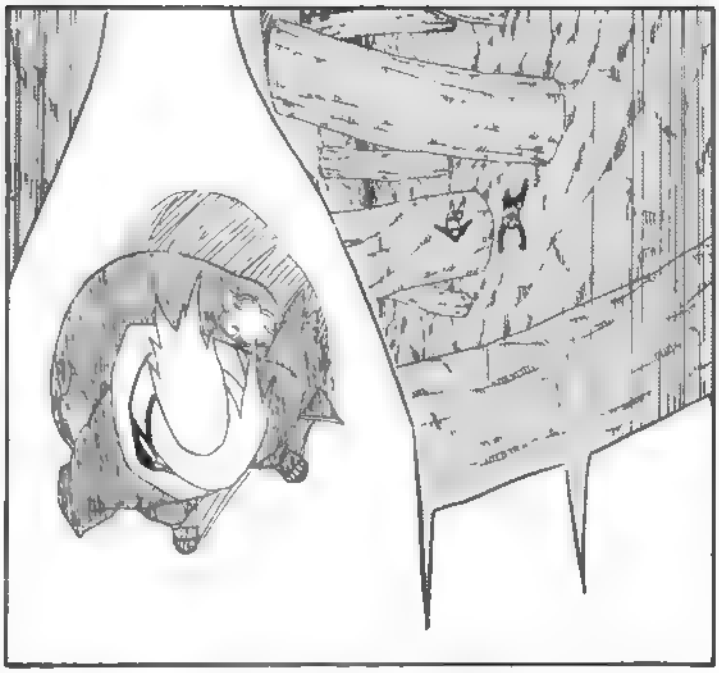


!! GLOM
I SAID WAIT, DIDN'T I?!

...!
DON'T WORRY.
WE'LL GET GAARA BACK!
URG...

!
...
SHF
CALM DOWN.
C'MON ...

LISTEN, NARUTO. YOU'RE NOT USED TO FIGHTING AN OPPONENT LIKE THIS.
YOU'RE A CLOSE COMBAT FIGHTER. HE EXCELS AT LONG-RANGE. THIS MAKES HIM YOUR WORST ENEMY.



SO WHAT ARE THEY?!

THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS TO BEAT THIS TYPE OF FOE.

BUT HOW?
TUP
FSSH

ONE IS TO FORCE HIM TO FIGHT UP CLOSE.
THE OTHER IS TO BEAT HIM AT HIS OWN GAME.

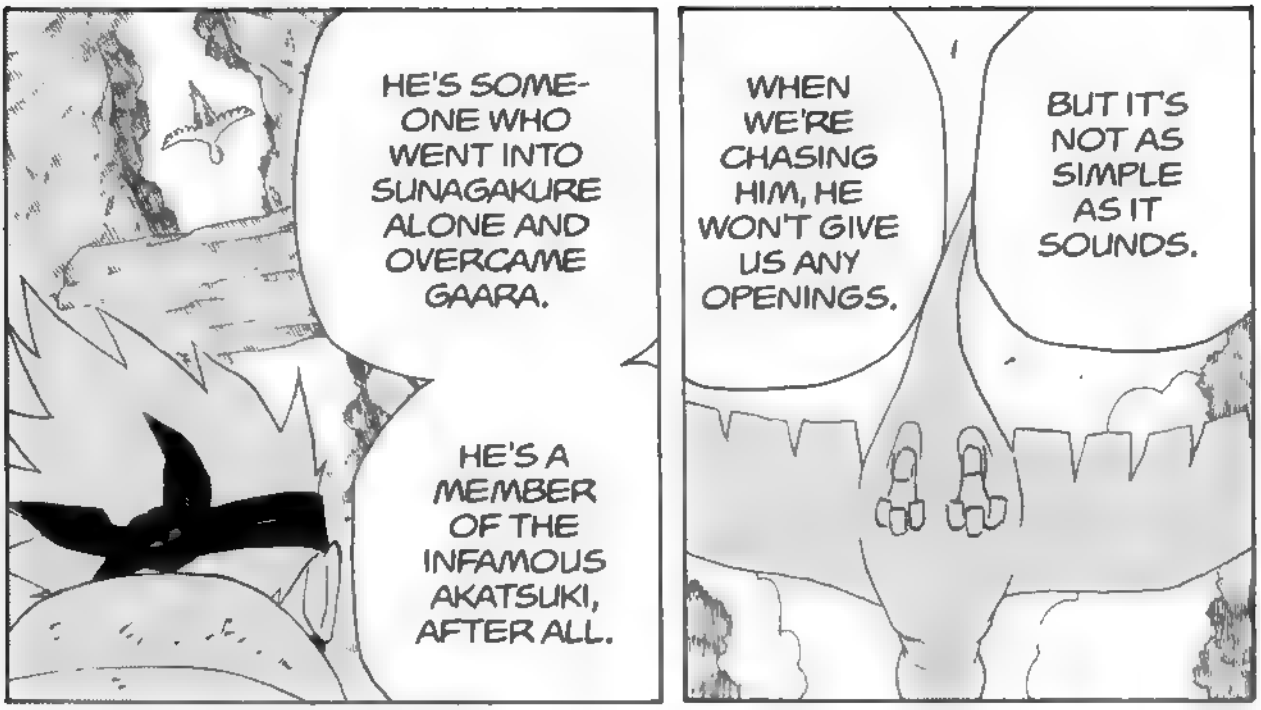
TWO OPTIONS. YOU NEED EITHER A LONG-RANGE FIGHTER...
OR SOMEONE WHO CAN USE LONG-RANGE NINJUTSU...
...ON YOUR TEAM.

WHICH ARE YOU, MASTER KAKASHI?
SPELL IT OUT, WILL YOU?!

NOW, IF YOU HAD THE SUPERIOR INTELLECT OF SHIKAMARU, THAT WOULD BE A DIFFERENT STORY.
IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE OR THE OTHER...
THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL BEAT HIM.

THEN WE MEET THE CONDITIONS!
THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU TO CALM DOWN.

I HAVE A SUPERIOR INTELLECT.
AH.. ME.
I'M A JŌNIN. AND I CAN SUSTAIN A LONG-RANGE BATTLE.


HE'S SOMEONE WHO WENT INTO SUNAGAKURE ALONE AND OVERCAME GAARA.
HE'S A MEMBER OF THE INFAMOUS AKATSUKI, AFTER ALL.
WHEN WE'RE CHASING HIM, HE WON'T GIVE US ANY OPENINGS.
BUT IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS IT SOUNDS.

...
...
YOU AND I, TOGETHER.
WE MUST CREATE AN OPENING OURSELVES.
SO WHAT DO WE DO?

I HAVE A PLAN.
IF YOU'RE WITH ME SO FAR, THEN STAY CLOSE.

SH WOOF
PFOOF
PFOOH
ZOOM

READ THIS WAY
CRACK
PFOF
SHFF
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
PFOF
HRRRR
ONE MINUTE LEFT.
NOT GOING TO ATTACK ME?
SIZZLE
BLURB
SHA
AA

SNI
KT
!!
!
TH
PLIP
OK
PLIP

TO BE CONTINUED IN *NARUTO* VOL. 31!